

RUSTY'S *TRAVELS*



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NASON H. ARNOLD





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RUSTY'S TRAVELS

A LITTLE DOG'S PART IN
A VACATION



RUSTY WATCHED WITH THEM THE CHANGING SCENE.

--Page 257.

Rusty's Travels

A Little Dog's Part in
a Vacation

By NASON H. ARNOLD

Author of "Rusty"

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RUSTY'S TRAVELS



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To My Wife

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Rusty's Travels

A Little Dog's Part in
a Vacation

CHAPTER I

RUSTY SUSPECTS SOMETHING

ARTHUR ABBOTT was either nervous or excited. That was perfectly plain to Mrs. Abbott the minute he came into his



GENERAL MANAGER

home late in the afternoon. Betty was still playing out of doors with Jennie and Pauline, and Rusty, the Abbotts' little black spaniel, now two years of age and general manager of the Abbott household, was with Betty and her friends.

"You look excited, Arthur," his wife said as she smiled up at him. Then her expression changed quickly as she asked, "Or are you worried? Isn't business going all right?"

"You say I am excited," Mr. Abbott laughed, giving his wife a hug and a kiss. "How you talk! What should I be excited about? I've been coming home to you for some years always just like this. As for business, it's going along as well as any business is at this time. No, Mrs. Abbott, I'm not worried about anything."

"I'm glad of that. Now tell me what you are excited about. I've known you for quite a few years, my dear, and I *know* when something unusual has hap-

pened or is about to happen. You cannot conceal it."

"S-sh," he warned. "The walls of this house have ears," he whispered dramatically. "Where is Betty and where is that dog?"

Mrs. Abbott laughed happily now that she knew there was nothing wrong. "Betty and Rusty are both out playing with Jennie and Pauline, but they will be in any minute now."

"I thought so. And I don't intend to be interrupted or tell anything to them yet. Nothing is certain. I'll tell you the minute we get them securely tucked into bed. Now don't bother me any more. I've got to act naturally, or Betty will know there is something doing and I shall have no peace."

He pushed his way by his happily smiling wife, hung his coat and hat in the hall closet, kissed her once more as he passed her while she stood in the hall watching

him with loving eyes. Whistling a tuneless tune off-key, Mr. Abbott mounted the stairs to prepare for the evening meal just as the outer door opened for Betty and Rusty to enter noisily from their play.

Betty, an outdoor girl, big for her age, began chattering about her play with the boundless enthusiasm of a healthy young person for whom life is filled with good things. Rusty sat close at her side, watching his big mistress to see whether she understood what was being told her.

Mrs. Abbott listened, as she did every day, to the exciting tales of the doings of her daughter and their friends, which included Rusty, for the black spaniel with one rusty spot at his throat that gave him his name could no more be left out of the play of the neighborhood than the sun could fail to shine on a cloudless day.

Mrs. Abbott finally interrupted the story with the suggestion that her daugh-

ter prepare for dinner, remarking that Father was home and undoubtedly was very hungry.

Accordingly, Betty, who never seemed to move with decorum but always rushed from one thing to another, hung up her coat and tossed her beret at a hook before hurrying upstairs to her own bathroom. Invariably Rusty followed to superintend the important operation of getting ready for a meal. Meals were very, very important in his life. But this time he stopped when part way up the stairs to look through the railing of the banisters at his big mistress. She was standing in the hall in deep thought, but with a smile on her lips.

Rusty hesitated, looked to see that Betty had gone on, then slowly retraced his steps. Walking around in front of Mrs. Abbott, he seated himself and looked up at her with big question marks in his eyes. As she turned to enter the

dining-room, she saw him for the first time.

“Why, Rusty!” she exclaimed. “How is it that you are not upstairs with Betty? I don’t understand. There! She is calling you.”

Rusty’s tail wagged very slowly, but he continued to look questioningly at her, paying no attention to Betty’s repeated calls.

“What is it?” Mrs. Abbott asked. “Are you sick? Is there something the matter with you? Have you and Betty had a falling out, and are you looking to me for sympathy?” She stooped and gently pulled one of his silky ears.

Rusty sat motionless.

After fondling him for a moment, she told him to go to Betty and help her get ready for dinner, and went into the dining-room. She gave no further thought to the actions of the household pet. Or, it should be said, to the actions of one of the

pets, for, besides Rusty, there was Mittens, the family cat with four white feet that looked for all the world as if she had drawn on mittens, and there was Rex, the huge St. Bernard that spent most of his time in the yard or in the garage with James, the chauffeur. Rusty alone of the pets had the run of the house. And Rusty did so many unusual things at such unexpected times that it was impossible for the mistress of such a large house to spend much of her valuable time deciding what he meant. She had learned that sometime she would know, because Rusty had a way of making his desires known. He got about everything he wanted, which, in the opinion of all but Betty, was decidedly more than was right for any dog.

So far as Betty was concerned, that evening meal was like almost all others, a happy occasion when all shared in the telling of the day's experiences, while

Rusty maintained a precarious seat on the chair with his little mistress, and gratefully accepted a bit of this or that which Betty fed him as automatically as she did herself.



AT THE TABLE

From his very first day as a puppy in this house of the Abbotts, Rusty had sat at table, and it was not an infrequent remark on the part of his master that, take his actions from first to last, he could give

some people he knew pointers on how to behave at the table.

This invariably brought a protest from Betty, who claimed that she behaved just as well as Rusty. To which her father replied that Rusty did not talk all the time and ate really very little, although he admitted that he did not chew his food, but seemed to have no use for his teeth.

While this meal was no different to Betty from any other, Mrs. Abbott wore an amused smile, and Rusty twice had to have his attention called to a piece of food Betty held for him before he accepted it. He gave all his attention to his master, with an occasional puzzled look at his big mistress.

Rusty knew something was about to take place. Usually he could understand what was likely to happen. But his expressive face said to Mrs. Abbott, as plainly as anything could be said, that he was frankly puzzled, and very anxious to

know what was going on in this household which he usually managed without the slightest trouble.

Several times Mrs. Abbott tried to catch the attention of her husband and have him look at Rusty, but he was too busily engaged in concealing his own feelings from Betty to pay any attention to his wife's nods and looks.

The meal over, the family gathered in the big living-room as they were accustomed to do when the weather did not permit the use of the piazza. But this late fall day with a hint of snow in the air was no time to sit out of doors.

Rusty slowly followed them into the room and stretched out in front of the fireplace.

"Rusty," cried Betty, "you haven't had your dinner yet! Go right straight into the kitchen to Mandy and have your dinner."

Rusty regarded her with a mournful

expression and slowly wagged his tail—but didn't get up.

Betty leaped from her chair and ran to him. "I do believe you're sick!" she cried, and then looked up at her mother. "He didn't act like this while he was playing with us, and I remember now that I had to speak to him at the table two or three different times to have him eat something."

She felt anxiously of his nose. "His nose is cold," she said with relief. "He can't have fever. Shall we call the doctor, Daddy?"

Mr. Abbott, who had been busily shaking out the evening paper which he was pretending to read, put it down and asked what she had said.

"Do you think we ought to have the doctor for Rusty?" Betty repeated. "He acts so queerly."

"Doctor! Doctor?" Mr. Abbott was puzzled and regarded Rusty with inter-

est. "What's the matter with him? He looks all right to me."

"I don't believe there is anything serious the matter with him," Mrs. Abbott offered, smiling wisely. "Take him out to the kitchen, Betty, and you will find he will eat his dinner. He seems to be puzzled about something. He is just thinking, I guess."

When Betty, with Rusty tucked under one arm, had disappeared in the direction of the kitchen Mr. Abbott demanded to know what his wife meant by saying that the dog was thinking. He laughed at the suggestion.

"Just what I say, Arthur," she replied. "When he came in with Betty, I was standing in the hall trying to guess what you have to tell me after Betty is abed. He knew instantly that something was out of the ordinary in this household, and he didn't go upstairs with Betty. Instead, he sat down in front of me and asked as

plainly as a person could, ‘What’s going on here that I don’t know about?’ ”

Mr. Abbott grunted derisively, and retired behind his paper as Betty entered the room.

“I guess he’s all right, after all,” she announced happily. “He is eating just as usual.”

“I never saw that dog when he couldn’t eat,” laughed her father. “He eats about six times a day, steals doughnuts from the baker, and gobbles all the Christmas ice cream and ——”

But Betty interrupted with a vigorous protest that Rusty had been only a puppy when he did those things, and that it was not fair to rake them up against him now that he was two years old and always well behaved.

Mr. Abbott replied that he hoped the dog would continue to walk the straight and narrow path because it was hard to teach an old dog that had once gone

wrong how to be a candidate for dog heaven.

Mrs. Abbott suggested that they drop the discussion of Rusty and permit Betty to do some home work that she was sure was waiting to be done. She was busily plying her needle on a bit of fancy-work, and Mr. Abbott promptly retired behind his paper again. But his wife noticed that he did not seem to find anything that held his attention for more than a moment, because he was constantly turning and shaking the pages.

Betty curled up in a big chair at one side of the fireplace, in which a chunk of wood blazed fitfully. The family all loved a fireplace, and used it on the slightest excuse, even when the radiators were full of steam.

By the time Betty had got settled, Rusty returned, and with a reproachful look at Mrs. Abbott walked to the hearth and stretched out again in front of the

fire, his back to it and his head where he could watch every move made by his big mistress or his master.

Betty reached down and pulled one ear, asked him if he felt all right, and buried her nose in her book. Only Mrs. Abbott occasionally glanced at the dog, an amused smile playing on her face.

It came time for Betty to go to bed, and she rather unwillingly closed a history book which she had unexpectedly found to be very interesting, kissed her father, and started upstairs. Rusty, his tail moving very gently, did not stir. For two years without fail he had been close at her heels when she started for bed, for Rusty believed in getting all the sleep possible when there was nothing else to do.

Mrs. Abbott said nothing, but watched to see what would happen. Betty, astonished when part way upstairs to find that Rusty was not with her, called him.

Reluctantly Rusty got to his feet and,

head and tail down, walked from the room slowly. As if it were an effort almost beyond his strength, he mounted the stairs.

A low throaty chuckle after Betty's door had closed attracted the attention of Mr. Abbott.

"What's the joke?" he asked. "You seem to find a great deal to amuse you this evening."

"I certainly do," replied Mrs. Abbott in a low tone. "Arthur, I haven't the slightest idea what it is that you are fairly bursting to tell me, but I actually believe that dog suspects. There is not the slightest thing the matter with him except that he senses that there is something unusual about to happen, and he is mortally afraid he is not to know what it is."

Mr. Abbott laid down his paper and threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"Bosh!" he said when he could speak. "You have the same vivid imagination

you have had always about anything connected with your family—even me.”

Mrs. Abbott merely smiled and said, “Wait and see. I’ll go up and make sure that Betty gets into bed, for I am very, very curious to know what it is you are keeping bottled up.”

“Well, I shall not tell until I am sure we shall not be interrupted, so get Betty and that marvelous dog that knows so much tucked in, and then come back and I’ll unload.”

While Mrs. Abbott was upstairs, her husband paced the floor of the living-room, very evidently in an excited state of mind.

“There,” said Mrs. Abbott as she returned, “they are both tucked in and just about asleep by this time. Now sit down, calm yourself, and let me know this great secret. How long have you known about it? Does it concern us all? Tell me everything.”

“If *you* will calm yourself,” retorted her husband, “and stop asking questions I’ll try to tell you, for I am ready to explode with it.”

He settled back in his chair.

“It’s something I have been thinking about and hoping we could do for two or three years.” He sat up abruptly. “Well, will you look at this! I thought you said they were asleep.”

Rusty was walking into the room, his tail motionless, those big eyes of his questioning first his mistress, then his master. He seated himself where he could watch the faces of both.

“Maybe there is something the matter with him,” said Mr. Abbott thoughtfully. “I never knew him to come downstairs after he had gone to bed with Betty.”

“And yet you refuse to believe that he knows something unusual is going on and that he intends to know what it is,” said his wife. “I know he does. Come,

Rusty, and sit here with me and hear all about it?" she said to the little spaniel.

Rusty looked at her to tell her that he had heard, swallowed as if about to speak, moved one front paw a trifle, and resumed his steady gaze into his master's face.

"You might as well begin your story," Mrs. Abbott said. "We shall not have any more privacy than we have now, and you might consider that I have as much interest in whatever it is you have to tell as Rusty possibly can have. You may be bursting to tell, but I shall collapse very soon if I do not know what this mighty secret of yours is."

Mr. Abbott, eyes on Rusty instead of on his wife, began again. "As I started to say, I've been hoping and planning on this for two years, and now I have got things so it will work out all right if it meets with your approval—and that of the dog," he added with a smile.

"Well, what is it?" Mrs. Abbott de-

manded with just a shade of impatience. "It isn't fair to keep me in suspense any longer."

"We are going South for two or three months! Drive. It will be great fun. I've always wanted to, and you will enjoy it and so will Betty."

Mrs. Abbott exclaimed with delight. "But Arthur, what about business? How can you leave? What about Betty's school? What about Mandy and James and Rex and Mittens—and Rusty?"

Once more Rusty moved his front feet, swallowed, looked from his mistress to his master. Then he walked to the side of Mrs. Abbott, sat down, pressed his body hard against her leg, and turned those appealing eyes of his on his master's face.

Mr. Abbott threw up both hands and laughed. "Never mind about the other questions. The only important one is whether Rusty goes, and all I've got to say is, he goes if we do."

Rusty said, "Woof," very softly, looked up gratefully at his mistress as she fondled one ear, then briskly trotted from the room and pattered up the stairs to his blanket on the foot of Betty's bed.

Mr. Abbott watched proceedings and slowly shook his head. "I'm beginning to believe that dog is intelligent," he said. "Now about business and the rest of your questions."

They talked long hours without further interruption. And when they had finished, it was definitely settled that they would leave for the South in about a week—Mr. and Mrs. Abbott, Betty, and Rusty.

CHAPTER II

RUSTY SELECTS THE ROUTE

WHAT Rusty had learned the evening before, he kept to himself the next morning. In other words, he acted exactly as he did every day, dashing down to breakfast, then scrambling back to his bed for his collar and submitting to having it buckled on by Mrs. Abbott.

“Rusty seems to be all right, Mother dear,” Betty observed, remembering what she had thought were symptoms of sickness the evening before. She gave Rusty one of her quick hugs which he had learned in his two years in the household were to be looked for at most unexpected times, and for no apparent reason. He responded with his customary quick, moist kiss when Betty lowered her cheek within range of his willing tongue.

Mrs. Abbott agreed that Rusty seemed to have recovered his usual spirits, and smiled to herself at the remembrance of the actions of their pet which had so distressed Betty and astonished her husband. Rusty looked at her with an expression that seemed to warn her about keeping their secret. So Betty went to school that morning with no knowledge of the long journey before her.

It proved the first of several extremely busy days for Rusty. Mrs. Abbott hurried from one thing to another. When she hurried and was very busy, Rusty had no time to sleep. The unusual always demanded his undivided attention.

That his mistress was very happy was perfectly plain, for she hummed or sang to herself as she went from closet to closet inspecting clothing and bringing out from their seclusion dress-suit cases and traveling-bags, all of which required personal looking over by Rusty. She accused him

of thinking that she was planning to run away from him.

To this, Rusty returned a look of disgust. This activity had every appearance to him of preparations for moving to camp, away up in the wilds of Vermont, and such goings on always required his presence. Besides she knew well that it had been promised that he was to go with them.

Once she stopped her explorations and gave her full attention to Rusty. "Won't Betty be surprised, Rusty, when she learns that we are going South for two months, maybe three, and perhaps, just perhaps, you understand, for the entire winter?"

Rusty wriggled away from her to resume his interrupted inspection of an open suitcase. It was perfectly plain to him that she was talking about the same thing that had been under discussion the evening before, but it was not to be ex-

pected that he knew what "South" meant. He had never heard that word until they had had their talk in the living-room after Betty had gone to bed. If she had said "camp," his reaction would have been different. That was the place where he had the best of times; a whole summer of running, swimming, fishing, and boating with Betty and her friends. But she didn't say "camp," so Rusty waited for nothing more. It was so utterly foolish to talk longer about something that had been definitely settled, so far as he was concerned.

It was at luncheon that noon that Betty was admitted to the secret of the impending journey to an entirely new part of the country for all of them. And what a time there was! Betty, fairly bubbling over with delight, hugged and kissed Rusty so vigorously that he forgot himself and said, "Yip!" twice. Her enthusiasm was catching, and Rusty was always

ready to catch enthusiasm for anything from anybody.

“ But what about Rex and Mittens and Mandy and James? ” Betty asked.

“ What about Rusty? ” her father asked in return, his eyes twinkling.

Betty stared at him for an instant, hugging the little black spaniel to her, before she said, “ Where I go, Rusty goes.” Then, fearing that there might be some doubt about it after all, she appealed to her mother. “ Rusty goes, doesn't he, Mother? ”

Mrs. Abbott smiled at her anxious daughter. “ Ask your father,” she replied, casting a look of amusement at her husband.

“ To tell the truth, Betty,” Mr. Abbott said, “ I hadn't given the matter much thought until I was about to tell your mother last evening after you and Rusty had gone to bed. I was just ready to tell her, when that dog there left your bed and

came down and sat where he could watch both of us. He knew there was something doing, and you didn't. Aren't you getting to be a little slow, to have a dog know more than you do?"

"Not if the dog is Rusty," Betty replied loyally. "I knew he must be going, because I couldn't leave him behind."

"But I didn't say he was going," her father insisted. "He is a terrible nuisance in the car. Besides, he couldn't sleep in hotels. There is hardly a hotel that will allow dogs in the rooms."

Betty thought hard for a moment before replying, her arms still close about her pet.

"Then Rusty and I will have to sleep somewhere else," she said finally. "There are camps and overnight houses all along the main roads. You know, we see them when we take long rides. Even up in Vermont, on the way to camp, they have them. I guess if there are such places up

here in the North, there are more of them on the way South."

"It seems to me," suggested Mrs. Abbott, "that it is time to stop teasing and admit that Rusty is going and that we shall all sleep under the same roof, wherever that may be."

"I suppose so," Mr. Abbott laughed. "I only wish I could be as certain about my affairs as Betty and Rusty are about things that concern them. We four are going," he said, turning to Betty, "and we will all stick together. We shall find places where they will allow Rusty to sleep with you or, if we cannot, we will just have to make the best of it and curl up in the car."

"Wouldn't that be heaps of fun!" cried Betty, jumping down from her chair to give her father a hug and a kiss, while Rusty kept his seat waiting for her to return and finish the meal. It had been poor pickings for Rusty so far.

But Betty was excited, and when she did return she ate very little and paid little attention to Rusty. Yet the dog didn't mind very much. If Betty ate, he did. If she didn't eat, he was always willing to forego his share because there was a real meal waiting for him in the kitchen.

Suddenly it dawned upon Betty that she had no idea where they were to go, and it would never do for her to go to school that afternoon without being able to tell teacher and Jennie and Pauline and all the rest of her schoolmates where she was to pass the winter. She wanted to know all about it.

"It's like this, Betty," her father responded in reply to her flood of questions. "I have had an offer of a cottage in an orange grove in or near the city of Lakeland. Both your mother and I have wanted to make a trip South, and this, it seems, is the chance. You will go to school down there and ——"

“ Oh, I don't want to go to school down there,” Betty interrupted. “ I want to see things and do things just as we do at camp. And Rusty will want to, too,” she added to clinch her argument.

“ You cannot afford to lose any terms of school,” her father replied, “ and you will not miss anything else. Your mother and I will not be going anywhere or doing anything without taking you along. And Rusty, of course,” he added with a broad grin.

Betty thought that going to school when away from home was pretty hard, but when it was pointed out to her that when she came home, if she didn't keep on with her school, she would be so far behind that she would no longer be in the same class with Jennie and Pauline, she quickly decided that it would be better to go to school, even while away from home.

The discussion had been so long and the excitement so general that Betty came

very near being late for the afternoon session. When her mother warned her of the flying minutes Betty, forgetting all about dessert, rushed around kissing her father and mother and hastily donning rubbers, coat, and beret. Rusty sat uncertainly in the chair. The idea of her leaving without dessert and after a very skimpy meal did not meet with his approval.

Shouting good-byes, Betty slammed the front door. In a moment she was back, calling to Rusty to come along and go to school with her, for every one there would wish to say good-bye to him. There was a moment of hesitancy on the part of Rusty, something very unusual when Betty called. Then he dashed for the door.

Going to school with Betty was nothing new for Rusty. After the first summer at camp where many exciting things had happened, he had been taken to school

on the invitation of Miss Judson, the teacher of Betty's grade, because she and the children desired to see the little dog of which Betty had told them so much.

Now, after a year under another teacher, Miss Judson had been promoted two grades and was once more in charge of the grade in which Betty, Jennie, and Pauline were. And Miss Judson liked dogs. So Rusty occasionally went to school, and either slept in the aisle near Betty's desk or caught forty winks on Teacher's desk.

But going to school without having his lunch did not meet with Rusty's full approval. He obeyed Betty's command to "heel" because he had been taught to do so, but instead of trotting along, head and tail up and keenly alive to everything that was going on in the street, he acted as if he were very unhappy.

Betty, filled with the news of the journey South, wondering about the cottage

in the orange grove and where they were to sleep on the different nights of the journey, and where she was to go to school, paid no attention to Rusty. She never did, because he always followed closely.

Jennie and Pauline were waiting for her at their corner and were immediately as enthusiastic as Betty over the astonishing news she had to tell. Usually they spoke to Rusty, and he always greeted them affectionately. But this afternoon they were too busy discussing the news to pay attention to him.

For the first time in his life, Rusty was grumpy. Betty had called him and he had gone with her because he always obeyed orders. But he couldn't understand why no one of them paid the slightest attention to him. It just wasn't fair. He lagged a little behind, then stopped and looked back. Cook would wonder why he hadn't followed the second-girl out to the

kitchen to eat the lunch that he knew was waiting for him. Besides, he was hungry. Betty had given him only two or three bites at the table instead of many. Nothing was right this afternoon. He decided that he would not go to school.

It was Jennie who remembered that she had not spoken to Rusty, and she looked around to find him standing fifty yards behind them, half turned as if to go back home.

“Why, Rusty!” she exclaimed.
“What are you doing ’way back there?”

Betty and Pauline stopped in astonishment. Betty ran back, calling, “Rusty. Rusty! I never knew you to do this before. What is the matter?”

Rusty sat down, swallowed, and licked his jaws, looked quickly up at his mistress, and then away. Rusty was very much offended, and he didn't mind a bit who knew it. In fact, he wanted every one to know it. This going to school with no one

paying him any attention, and without his lunch, too, was no joke.

The three girls stooped and petted him, talking to him to try to find out why, for the first time, he should have failed to follow closely. But Rusty stubbornly sat there. Betty took him by the collar to try to make him walk with her, but he made her drag him.

Tears rushed to Betty's eyes, and Jennie and Pauline were much distressed, for they were almost as fond of Rusty as was his little mistress. Betty again stooped and a great big tear dropped squarely on Rusty's nose. That was enough for him. He had seen Betty cry at different times and he had always made it his business to comfort her. He forgot about his hunger, raised his head quickly and kissed her, showing plainly that he was willing to go along with them as if nothing had happened. And he did. But the three girls, still not understanding what could have

been the reason for his stopping, kept a close watch on him the rest of the way to school.

It certainly was a surprise that Betty had for Miss Judson when she told her that the Abbott family and Rusty were to start in a few days for the South, perhaps for all winter. Miss Judson said such a trip would be a wonderful experience, and promised to give Betty information for her teacher which would aid her in placing Betty in the right classes. Rusty was lifted to Miss Judson's desk, and was thankful that she always had a cracker or two in a drawer especially for him, for it saved him from actually starving to death during a very long afternoon.

"Whaffo' you go off widout yo' lunch?" Mandy demanded when Rusty dashed into the kitchen as soon as he got home from school. "Don' yo' know no better dan dat?" she asked him as he be-

gan actually gobbling his meal that had been waiting for him ever since noon.

“ I jes’ heard yo’ is gwine South wid de folks, an’ I’d lak to know who’s gwine to get yo’ meals. ’Specially,” she continued with a sniff, “ ef yo’ is comin’ for dem whenever yo’ is good an’ ready. Nobody else is gwine to keep a dog’s dinner nice for him till he gets ’round to eat it. I’s tellin’ yo’ now, if yo’ is late to any mo’ meals in dis yer house, you’ll go widout eatin’ till de next meal is ready. Yo’ unnerstan’ dat.”

Rusty long since had learned that Cook’s talk might sound bad, but that she didn’t mean it, so far as he was concerned. He didn’t mind her daily scoldings, so he kept on eating as only a hungry dog that had had nothing to eat from breakfast until almost four o’clock, except two crackers and three very small bites of Betty’s lunch, can eat. And that is very, very fast.

At last, satisfied that not a morsel had been left on the plate, he backed away, licked his mouth clean, and cocked his head inquiringly at Cook to know whether she had forgotten that he had missed dessert as well as the more substantial part of the meal. Rusty loved desserts.

“No, sir,” Cook told him without looking up from her work of mixing dough for biscuits. “Dat’s pos’tively all yo’ is gwine get. An’ I’m tellin’ yo’ right now dey ain’t nobody but me who’d kep’ yo’ dinner waitin’ all dis time. Yo’ go ’long ’bout yo’ business an’ don’ be late for supper, or you ain’t gwine hab any.”

Rusty, of course, couldn’t understand all that was said to him, but he could understand the meaning. He inspected his dish once more to be certain that his dessert had not in some mysterious manner got on his plate without his seeing it, sat up solemnly, and offered to shake hands.

“Ma’ hand’s all dough,” Cook told him,

but she took hold of a corner of her apron, and with that shook hands with Rusty and told him once more to go along about his business and stop bothering her.

So Rusty charged the swing door into the butler's pantry and shot through it, as he had learned to do after pinching his tail several times because he was too slow. He went in search of Mrs. Abbott and found her and his master, unexpectedly home early, with maps and papers spread out on a table, trying to decide what route to take to Lakeland.

Rusty spoke very softly to attract their attention. Everybody but Cook seemed to ignore him.

"I suppose we might leave it to the dog," said Mr. Abbott. "He has decided about everything for this family for two years. Probably he could select the best route."

Mrs. Abbott laughed, and went on tracing with a pencil a route down through

the States that would take them to their destination.

Rusty, a little sleepy after his hearty but belated meal, watched the proceedings



“THERE IT IS, UNDER HIM!”

for a moment before flopping down for a nap.

“Where’s that Rand-McNally map we had a minute ago?” Mr. Abbott asked, shuffling the maps on the table. They

both hunted several minutes before Mr. Abbott shouted with laughter.

“ I told you,” he exclaimed, “ that the dog would settle it! There it is, under him! ”

So that was how they finally decided to go by the route they had marked on that particular map.

CHAPTER III

RUSTY MAKES A FRIEND

THE next week in the Abbott household was a nightmare. Mr. Abbott said so, and he ought to have known. Mrs. Abbott called it hectic. Betty told every one it was exciting. Rusty, if you had asked him and he could have described his feelings, would have declared it to have been a three-ring circus.

Rusty thought it better in every way than getting ready for camp, because there was much more being done in which he could interfere. He didn't go to bed with Betty. No amount of coaxing would induce him to leave the excitement downstairs where planning and packing was going on after Betty retired. He insisted on being on hand. "Under foot," Mr. Abbott called it.

Everything was topsy-turvy in the house and, so far as Betty was concerned, at school also. She just could not study, and Miss Judson, a very wise young teacher, did not bother Rusty's little mistress. She was young enough to understand.

One day the door-bell rang. Rusty left Mrs. Abbott in her bedroom to get along as well as she could without his aid, and dashed for the front hall to escort the caller into the big room. When Sarah opened the door, Rusty's tail instantly stopped wagging. Two strange ladies stood there. Rusty knew at once that one of them and possibly both did not like little dogs. He did not guide them to the easy-chairs, but immediately mounted the stairs to give further aid to Mrs. Abbott.

Even when he heard her talking excitedly with them, he remained upstairs and finished sorting some clothing she had been arranging. His work, he learned

later, did not please his mistress. But it had been fun. He had handled each garment carefully, merely piled them differently.

“ You see, Rusty,” said Betty that evening while they were preparing to retire, although Rusty had no intention of remaining after Betty got into bed, “ Aunt Carrie and her friend, Miss Wisters, have come from New York to live here while we are down South. Daddy and Mother do not wish to leave the house shut up, so they are going to live in it for us. Mandy and Sarah will stay, and so will James to see to things and care for Rex, and to take them riding in the other car when the weather is not too cold for them. It is a beautiful arrangement, even if Miss Wisters does not like dogs. You don't mind that very much, do you? ”

“ Yip,” said Rusty.

“ I knew you didn't, because it will be only one more day before we are gone.”

Rusty listened to this long explanation with a bored expression, and kissed Betty gratefully at its conclusion. He was quite accustomed to long stories from Betty, and was always pleased when they were ended, for Betty was particular that he did not doze off while she was talking to him.

It was the second morning after this explanation of the appearance of the two strange ladies that Rusty, who had had an especially strenuous day the day before, poked his head out from under his blanket to discover that Betty was gone. Sounds from downstairs told him plainly that every one but Rusty was eating breakfast.

One bound, one shake, and he was on his way. By the time he had reached the bottom of the stairs and slid to the front door before being able to turn and dash for the dining-room, he had forgotten how provoked he was at Betty for leaving him behind. She had never done that before.

“ I told you! ” exclaimed Mr. Abbott, as Rusty scrambled to his place beside Betty on her chair, unmindful of the sniff he was sure he heard Miss Wisters give. “ It is impossible to get a start on anything without that dog being under foot. I thought if we could eat and get the car packed we might escape without breaking a leg by falling over him. But here he is. No, I mean there he goes! ”

The last sentence was prompted by Rusty's sudden leaping from Betty's chair and standing up at the window. He had heard some slight noise out in the drive, and had discovered the big car standing there. He had to know at once whether James was on the seat and ready to go.

Betty called him back, and Mrs. Abbott reminded him that he was not dressed and could neither have any breakfast nor go anywhere with them until he was wearing his collar. He made the quickest

round trip to his bed on record, and could not stand still while Mrs. Abbott buckled it on.

Another dash to the window to make certain that James was not waiting for him was followed by a few hurried bites with Betty, who was not eating much herself.

He listened attentively while Mr. Abbott explained that he expected to get over Bear Mountain bridge sometime in the afternoon if the going were not too bad in the cold, sleety rain that was beginning to fall. "We will spend the first night in New York State somewhere," he said, "go through Delaware Water Gap the next morning, and be well on our way to the land of oranges and alligators. I hope that suits Rusty." He grinned at the dog.

"Woof," said Rusty very softly, and looked his astonishment when Miss Wisters jumped and exclaimed, "My stars!

That dog is the noisiest animal I ever saw."

"Well, come on. Let's get going," said Mr. Abbott as he rose from the table.

Rusty was at the side door in two jumps, and when Mr. Abbott opened it to call James to aid in packing the car, Rusty shot out and leaped on the running-board. Mr. Abbott sighed and opened the car door. Rusty immediately leaped to his seat in front.

It had been settled several evenings before that he was to go, and he intended that nothing should make him budge from his seat. During all the commotion of packing and rearranging suitcases, grips, and bundles in the back, Rusty never once turned his head. He maintained the stiff attitude of a footman, looking neither to the right nor the left.

Suddenly Mr. Abbott reached in, tucked Rusty under one arm and marched into the house. Rusty could not under-

stand such treatment. He was very much offended. Carried directly into the kitchen he was astonished to find Betty seated at Mandy's table mournfully trying to drink a glass of milk, and what Mandy called "peckin'" at cereal.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Abbott severely, "we shall not budge one inch until you and that young lady there eat breakfast. The quicker you begin, the sooner we shall get started. I'll sit down and drink another cup of coffee, so you might as well make up your mind to eat."

Rusty didn't pretend to understand everything that was said. But actions spoke louder than words, and when the others ate he took a chance. Before Rusty knew it, he had "licked the platter clean." Betty, too, had managed to drink her milk and eat most of her cereal. Five minutes later they were on their way to a long series of adventures.

Both Rusty and Betty were getting

very hungry when Mr. Abbott stopped at a restaurant in a small city. Betty picked up Rusty to prevent him from getting his feet dirty, and they took their seats at a table, Rusty of course seated with his little mistress.

The proprietor said something in a low tone to Rusty's master which caused Mr. Abbott to rise immediately, saying that he had no desire to break any rules and they would lunch elsewhere. Rusty knew something was wrong but, while he had never eaten in a restaurant before, he knew that he had done nothing to cause a disturbance and he was very, very hungry. The waiter hovered about to learn whether he was to serve them. He knew dogs, and petted Rusty and asked Betty about him.

After some further low-toned conversation, Mr. Abbott seated himself again, having reached some understanding with the proprietor. Betty and Rusty ate their

meal as usual to the amusement of other diners. Later, with a paper spread on the floor, Rusty enjoyed a more substantial repast from the dish the friendly waiter brought him.

Rusty, riding most of the time on the back seat with Betty, but occasionally in Mrs. Abbott's lap on the front seat, was standing on Betty's lap leaning from the window one day as the car moved slowly between cotton fields in Virginia, when he caught sight of a fat colored woman standing in the doorway of a cabin.

With a delighted bark Rusty nearly leaped out of the car, Betty with a cry of astonishment seizing him just in time.

"He almost jumped right out of the automobile," she explained to her father who had jammed on the brakes upon hearing her cry.

"He thought that colored woman was Mandy," laughed Mr. Abbott. "We must watch him, or he will follow off some

one of them, thinking he is to get something to eat. He thinks no one but colored women feed him."



RUSTY NEARLY LEAPED OUT OF THE CAR

"I'm not colored," protested Betty, "and I feed him every meal."

"I notice that he seems to need something more," Mr. Abbott laughed.

They were rolling along at a fast pace just at dusk one evening when Rusty was

aroused by the squealing of the brakes and an exclamation from his big mistress. He sprang to look out and saw a mother goat followed by several tiny kids crossing the highway.

“Yip, yip!” Rusty called to tell them he was in a hurry. All he got for his pains was more delay, for the nanny stopped short and laughed at him, which was very irritating. It was some time before Rusty stopped grumbling to himself about what the goat had said. He must have understood the language better than the others, for they all thought it a great joke.

Rusty had one other adventure with a black squirrel in a huge cage in a restaurant where they lunched the next noon. The squirrel was unlike his cousins that Rusty had seen and been accustomed to scold at camp. He was all black except for white ears and nose and the gray tip of his tail. Rusty wanted very much to

talk about it, especially as the squirrel dashed up and down the tree in the cage and chattered at Rusty every minute he was in the room. But Betty would not allow him to talk back.

But as soon as he was out in the car and could see the squirrel in the window, Rusty told him several things, including his opinion that a black squirrel was not nearly so good-looking as his gray cousins of the North. Rusty was still talking about it long after they had left the scene and had other things to see.

He had never been on such a long drive before, and he found it difficult to understand how it happened that each night they slept in a different room, where he had to look all around before he could settle down to sleep. Neither did he understand why it was that he was always on the end of a leash in the strange places where he walked with them before retiring at night. He couldn't understand

that Mr. Abbott feared that he might become lost.

Rusty was hanging out of the window one day, barking at every cow and calf that seemed to find the best pasturage at the edge of the highway, when they passed a signboard that told them Lakeland was only seven miles beyond.

They stopped once to ask a policeman the way, and Rusty kissed his hand in return for a friendly pat. At last they turned into a driveway and drove up to a pretty cottage in an orange grove.

All eyes were turned on their future home.

“Yip,” said Rusty.

“Always the first to approve,” remarked Mr. Abbott. “It looks pretty good to me, too. Let’s see what we have for a winter home.”

Every one hurried to get out of the car, with Rusty the first to bound up the steps. On the piazza he stood on his hind legs to

look through the window. Betty was beside him in a moment.

“There’s a fireplace,” she cried.
“Goody! Goody!”

“That’s comforting,” laughed her father, from whom the perspiration was pouring, for it was a very warm afternoon. “We ought to build a roaring fire at once to keep off the chill.”

He unlocked the door and Betty and Rusty went racing through the roomy cottage on a tour of inspection. The big living-room with its fireplace, the enclosed sleeping-porch with its dozen half-windows which could be opened, the tiny inside dining-room, the kitchen and the big porch at the rear, where they would eat most of their meals, all brought exclamations of delight from Betty and barks of hearty approval from Rusty. They had reached their destination and found it good.

“Now,” said Mr. Abbott, “either shut

that dog up or tie him, for I have the car to unload and I cannot do it successfully, to say nothing of safely, with that dog between my legs. As an interferer, he is superior to any on the All-America football team, and his tackles when he gets between my legs are sure to bring me down."

Betty found the leash. Rusty, offended, was tied securely to the leg of the center-table. He considered such treatment to be cruelty to animals and whimpered about it. He felt so badly that Mrs. Abbott stopped to fondle him and tell him that he would be obliged to suffer the indignity for only a few minutes.

Every time that Mr. Abbott entered with grips and bundles, Rusty turned his head and looked elsewhere. He intended that his master should know that he was aware of who was responsible for such treatment of a thoroughly nice dog.

It was late in the afternoon and Mrs.

Abbott, having investigated the supplies that had been arranged for by mail, called that all she needed was milk. She suggested that Mr. Abbott take the car and Betty and Rusty, and go to the city and buy some. Mr. Abbott groaned and grumbled but dutifully arose from a big chair into which he had dropped, when a step was heard on the piazza. The door-bell rang. Rusty, forgetting that he was tied, sprang as usual to receive the caller.

Crash! A perfectly good vase was worthless. Gay flowers that had been in it to welcome the newcomers floated across the floor.

Confusion reigned for a moment. Betty rushed and untied her pet. Free at last, Rusty dashed to the door and waited for it to be opened, recalling to the others the visitor awaiting a response.

Betty opened the door. Rusty's tail, after one look, wagged vigorously. Here was a new friend!

Their caller, bareheaded, had under one arm a pan containing ice, and in the other hand a bottle of milk.

He introduced himself as Mr. Travers, son of the owner of the grove, explaining that he lived during the winter in an apartment at the garage and, knowing that they would need ice and milk, he had obtained them in the morning and arranged for future deliveries.

Mr. Abbott relieved him of the commodities, and explained that his thoughtfulness had saved a tired man from driving back to the city to obtain the milk.

Mr. Travers declined an invitation to visit, merely asking if he could be of any assistance. While he was talking, his eyes were constantly on Rusty.

Introductions being over, he stooped and said to Rusty, "How do you do, little fellow."

Rusty gave a joyous "Woof," because here was a man after his own heart. He

wiggled all over until, suddenly remembering his manners, he sat up and offered his paw.

Mr. Travers gravely shook hands, pulled one of the long, silky ears and stepped back to admire him. "I hope I'll see a lot of him," he said. "I love dogs."

"Yip," said Rusty.

"You'll probably see all you want of him," Mr. Abbott laughed. "He's the greatest nuisance in the wide world if you are doing anything. And I warn you that you can't have a secret from him."

"I shouldn't want one," said Mr. Travers simply. He said good-night and turned back to his apartment.

Rusty, his tail wagging, stood and watched him from the piazza until he disappeared inside his rooms. He knew he had a friend upon whom he could count. Dogs are like that. Immediately he decided that it was time to look over the outside of the property.

CHAPTER IV

RUSTY GATHERS EGGS

RUSTY followed a few steps toward the garage before he stopped to think things over. He was hungry, and he had not seen what the back of the house looked like. That was most important. He turned and trotted toward the rear in the gathering dusk. He didn't know then that in the South when the evening shadows fall, they shut down very quickly.

Through the open windows he could hear the excited talking in the cottage. Knowing that his family was near, he ambled along to a pile of loose boards and odds and ends of wood. Something might be under them. He sniffed, jumped back and, puzzled, stood still. A strange scent came to him!

Very cautiously he crept forward a

step, two steps, his sensitive nose informing him that something was in there with which he was not familiar. Curiosity was strong, but cautiousness was stronger. He backed away and barked threateningly. Nothing happened. Advancing once more he barked defiantly, challenging whatever was under those boards to come out and be looked over.

Instead of an answer to his challenge coming from under the wood, there was Betty's call from the back porch.

"Rusty. Rusty! Where are you? Come here this minute. How did you get out, and what have you found?" Betty had forgotten that Rusty had been on the front piazza when Mr. Travers left!

He heard the slam of the screen door of the back porch as Betty came to find him. Rusty hesitated. He usually obeyed her call promptly. But here under the wood was something new and strange. He barked again to guide her, for dark-

ness had fallen and every one was excited that evening. Betty stooped down beside him, and Rusty excitedly told her that something was under there that they ought to investigate.

Just then Betty's father called her to bring in the dog. "Mother has a good supper all ready," he said, "and you must get to bed early to-night. We are all tired and need the rest."

Without wasting any time on Rusty's discovery, Betty picked him up and stumbled her way to the back door, thinking as she went that she could not recall ever having eaten a meal her mother had cooked. Mandy had always been the cook, as far back as Betty could remember.

The table was spread on the back porch, and to Betty's astonishment scrambled eggs just as light and fluffy as any Mandy made and some biscuits that she couldn't have told from Mandy's were

already on the table, and her mother was flying about with a smile on her face, putting the finishing touches to the first meal in their winter home.

"I didn't know you could cook like that!" Betty exclaimed, her astonishment at her mother's ability plainly evident in her tone.

Her father, coming just then from the pump in the back yard with two brimming pails of water, seemed to find much amusement in his daughter's remark. But he said nothing.

"I have cooked, Betty," her mother replied. "I rather enjoy it, but your father prefers Mandy's efforts."

"This is a vacation," Mr. Abbott remarked, "and cooking is no vacation. We'll go into the city to-morrow and see whether there isn't somebody like Mandy who will take over the cooking."

A very tired and very sleepy girl drank a glass of milk and ate sparingly of the

delicious meal her mother had prepared. Rusty was obliged to remind his little mistress several times that he was being shamefully neglected in the matter of food.

Apparently forgetting his excitement over what was in the wood in the yard, Rusty was willing enough to follow Betty to bed, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Abbott to finish unpacking in peace, considerably to their surprise.

“The next time we go anywhere,” said Mr. Abbott when he stretched out at last in a comfortable chair, “we’ll get that dog so tired that he goes off to sleep. We have had a peaceful time getting things straightened out to-night.”

Betty was aroused early the next morning by Rusty’s efforts to reach the half-windows over their bed. A mocking bird, bent on showing off his accomplishments for the benefit of the newcomers, was “singing his head off,” as Mr. Abbott

phrased it, in the pecan tree in front of the cottage.

Betty and Rusty scrambled out of bed, and after Betty had very hastily dressed they went out on the piazza to see the songster. It was very early, and Mr. Abbott groaned at the thought of arising at such an hour while on a vacation. A mist was lifting from the lake, holding Betty entranced with the changing scene.

So intent was she on watching the far shore gradually come into view from behind its filmy curtain that it was several minutes before she missed her pet. She called. No answer! Then she thought of the pile of wood. She ran around the house.

There she found Rusty intently watching a large white hen, half hidden under some boards.

Rusty's experiences had never covered close association with hens. He was not certain what might happen if he pushed

his nose too close, so he was lying, nose on paws, awaiting developments.

Exclaiming over the discovery, Betty ran into the cottage to report what they had found the first thing in the morning.

“ I knew we were to have all the grapefruit and oranges we wanted,” Mr. Abbott solemnly assured his daughter, “ but this is the first I had heard that we were to have hens provide us with fresh eggs. I strongly suspect that Mrs. Biddy is laying an egg, and she should be undisturbed until that interesting function has been completed. I would call Rusty away, because otherwise he will miss his breakfast. We must get that meal over, for we are to go to the city and find some successor to Mandy.”

So Betty ran out again and, with much coaxing, persuaded Rusty to follow her into the house. Rusty was very reluctant to leave, for, during Betty's absence, he had discovered that when he moved an

inch closer and whined the hen ruffled her feathers and showed a disposition to give him some fun.

While Mrs. Abbott was preparing breakfast, Mr. Abbott, having brought in fresh water and shaved, went with Betty and Rusty to see what they had found. The hen was still there and showed plainly that she did not appreciate such a large audience, and one spectator in particular that insisted on getting too close to her.

“When I get time,” said Mr. Abbott, “I’ll find where the hen comes from. She has stolen her nest, and some one of the neighbors is missing eggs every day. You ask Mr. Travers, Betty. He will know who among the neighbors keeps hens.”

Betty enjoyed her breakfast more than she had her supper, there being no need to urge her to eat, or Rusty, either, as there had been that morning a little more than a week before when they had started on their journey South.

It was after breakfast when Rusty, making a closer inspection of the house than he had taken time to do the evening before, discovered that the back porch door was not latched. Mr. Abbott, entering with the pails of water, had not been careful. Rusty, having made his discovery, charged the door as he did the one into the butler's pantry at home, and was out in the yard.

His absence was not discovered for some little time. Every one else was busy. Just as Mrs. Abbott had called to Betty that they were going to the city, they were startled by an exclamation from Mr. Abbott at the front door. They hurried to see what could have happened.

He was looking with mixed emotions at his feet. Rusty at some little distance from him was slowly wagging his tail as he looked from one to the other of his family, awaiting their approval.

“Will you look at this mess!” Mr. Ab-

bott exclaimed in disgust. He pointed to the piazza floor and held up one foot dripping with the yolk of an egg. "That dog has robbed a hen's nest. Look at them!" He pointed to the piazza floor.

A moment of complete silence followed before Rusty's whole body wiggled and his mouth opened, as if to join in the hilarious laughter of his big mistress. Long before then he had given up wondering why she laughed at something he had done which did not seem to him to have been funny. But he knew that when she did laugh, everything was all right.

When she could control her emotions she pointed and began to count: "One, two, three, four, five, six—why, Arthur, there are, or were, I should say, nine eggs here!"

" 'Were' is correct," he replied with disgust. "I opened this door and, not expecting to find a sitting of eggs just outside, I kicked one. Trying to recover

myself I stepped on another. It's lucky I didn't lose my balance and fall. That would have been a mess!"

"But where's the hen?" Betty cried, pushing through the door and stepping carefully in order not to get into the fresh yolks. "He can't have killed the hen!" She ran around the corner.

"What I want to know is how he got out," said Mr. Abbott. "We must find that out at once, or something may happen to him. He's altogether too inquisitive, and this is strange territory to him. This door was latched, the back door was shut, and all the windows have wire screens in them."

Mrs. Abbott agreed that Rusty's secret must be learned, but it was some time before they were permitted to share it with him.

Betty came racing around the house to announce that the hen was gone, and that there was nothing in the nest.

Mr. Abbott, who was carefully picking up the undamaged eggs, with Rusty hovering close at hand, anxious for a pat of approval for having thus supplied the family larder, laughed.

“ I told you before breakfast that some neighbor's hen had stolen her nest, and that we must find the owner because the eggs do not belong to us. Now I suppose we ought to pay for these two that I broke. Or make Rusty pay for them,” he added, frowning at the spaniel.

The tail instantly stopped wagging. Rusty looked away, then back quickly, trying to catch a change of expression on his master's face. Seeing no hope there, he walked, head and tail down, to the far corner of the piazza and sat down, leaning hard against the corner post, the picture of complete dejection.

Betty ran to him, promising that he should not be obliged to pay for the eggs, and telling him that it was wonderful how

he had picked them up and carried them to the house and put them down without even cracking one.

“You didn’t break them,” said Betty. “You found them and brought them out where others could see them.”

“That’s true enough,” her father said with a laugh. “But he ought to have put up a red light to stop traffic. I suppose I shall be obliged to forgive him, but I have a good notion to make him clean my shoes.”

Betty said that raw eggs were not good for little dogs, and after some argument it was agreed that Betty and Rusty should find Mr. Travers and learn from him where the hen and the eggs belonged.

They ran for the garage. Mr. Travers must have been watching for them for he opened the door before they reached it and came out to meet them. Betty told of how Rusty had found the hen and of his carrying them to the house. “You

see," she explained solemnly, "he did that once with all the rubbers and overshoes in the neighborhood up home, but I don't believe he will do it again."

"Yip," said Rusty.

"That means he agrees with me," said Betty. "He understands almost everything we say."

"That is very evident," Mr. Travers admitted, with an understanding smile.

When Betty told of Rusty's barking at another place in the woodpile the evening before, Mr. Travers thought for a moment before replying. "It couldn't have been the hen," he said. "Probably there is a snake under there, but it is a harmless one. However, we shall have to get rid of that pile of wood."

The hen, Mr. Travers said, undoubtedly belonged to Mr. Webster, and he suggested that they take the eggs to him. Betty ran to the house to get the eggs but Rusty, after following part way, stopped

to see what Mr. Travers was going to do. It was a question with Rusty which of them would provide him with the more excitement. When he found his new friend following, he was satisfied to race after Betty.

No sooner had they stepped through an opening in the fence between the two properties than terrific barking in high-pitched tones greeted them from a distance. Betty and Rusty stopped, not knowing what to expect.

“That’s Maggie and Flossie, Mr. Webster’s pug dogs,” Mr. Travers explained. “They make a lot of disagreeable noise, but they are harmless.”

“Pug dogs!” Betty exclaimed with a puzzled air. “I never heard of such animals.”

“Probably not,” Mr. Travers agreed, “but your father and mother will both remember them, for they were very popular years ago. You do not see them very

often now. These two are mother and daughter, and they are very snippy. They do not care to associate with everybody."

Rusty was forming his own opinion without any aid from Mr. Travers. It was not a very high opinion, either. He marched along, occasionally growling as if to himself, but not barking in reply to the others. He was trying to decide what sort of dogs were making such a racket.

The two pugs, the daughter behind the mother, advanced a few steps from their kennel as the others neared the house. Rusty, fearing they intended harm to his little mistress, rushed at them with a sharp bark of warning that told them plainly he would not stand any nonsense from them. Both pugs whirled around, their tails tightly curled over their backs, and dived into their home. Once safely in their shelter, they resumed their furious barking.

Rusty, curious now, walked slowly to

within a few feet of the entrance of the kennel, but almost turned a back somersault in his surprise when Maggie, fearing he meant harm to her daughter, rushed out of the door with all her teeth on display.

But once over his surprise, he stood his ground, his heavier bark answering that of the indignant Maggie. Mr. Travers laughed heartily at Rusty's surprise, and even Betty, frightened a little at first, managed to smile.

While this battle of barks was in progress, Mrs. Webster had appeared to learn what all the racket was about. Betty and Rusty were introduced, and Mrs. Webster was much amused at the story Betty told of the eggs, and said she must borrow Rusty to collect her eggs for her.

She chatted with Betty for some minutes and told her to tell her mother that she would call as soon as they were set-

tled, and that later they would go bird-hunting.

Betty doubted whether her mother would wish to do such a thing, until Mrs. Webster explained that she meant hunting them with bird glasses to see what



THEY WOULD TURN TAIL AND RUN

they did. Then Betty was sure that they all would like to go.

As they said good-bye and started back, Maggie and Flossie came out of their retreat and started a rear-guard action with Rusty. Every few yards, Rusty would

turn around and run a few steps back toward the pugs, at which they would turn tail and run. This process was repeated time and again all the way to the fence, and even after they were back on the property of Mr. Travers.

“I should think they would wear out their voices,” said Betty. “They are very tiresome, and nobody wants to be friends with them.”

“I agree with you about their voices,” Mr. Travers said, “but before long you will find that Rusty has become friendly with them.”

Betty expressed her doubts whether even Rusty could bring himself to associate with such as they, but time was to prove that she was wrong, at least so far as one of them was concerned.

CHAPTER V

RUSTY FINDS BUNNY

As they came within sight of the garage they saw that Mr. Abbott had backed the car out. Rusty, busy as he had been for two hours, and with much more investigating to do, had no intention of missing a ride. He dashed for the car, barking joyously.

“Want to go, Betty?” her father asked. “Either you must come with me and hold this dog, or take him into the house.”

It is just a waste of words and good paper to write that Rusty went for a ride that morning. Mr. Abbott drove to several places in the city before he made arrangements with a woman to do the cooking for the Abbotts. Rusty was

greatly excited at each stop, for it seemed to him that he saw Mandy several times, but only one of Rusty's Mandys paid any attention to him. It may seem strange, but she was the one engaged by Mr. Abbott.

"I presume she is the poorest cook in the lot," he grumbled, "but she liked Rusty. It has got so that no one can do anything without asking that black imp if it suits him."

"Yip," said Rusty.

Charged by Mrs. Abbott with a number of errands, Mr. Abbott encountered the same friendly policeman who had directed them the afternoon before, and again stopped to ask directions. While the officer was giving information, he was petting Rusty. Nobody thought then how important to the entire Abbott family the officer's liking for Rusty was to prove.

They tried a new route home, and when

they reached their lake, as they already called it, they came to a little pavilion built out over the water, on which a big man wearing a tremendous broad-brimmed hat was seated watching several lines that he had put out. Mr. Abbott stopped the car.

“Let’s go and see what they catch for fish in this lake of ours,” he suggested. Betty and Rusty promptly tumbled out of the car.

The fisherman proved to be an elderly man who said in his delightful Southern drawl that he was from northern Texas and had come to Lakeland to visit a daughter. He said he fished to help kill time, because he missed having many things to look after, as he had at home.

Rusty, remembering the fishing he had done with Mr. Abbott’s brother at camp, knew what the lines in the water meant. He walked from one end of the platform to the other, stopping at each line to look

intently at the water, where the bob floated serenely, for not a breath of air stirred the surface of the lake.

Betty, perched on the railing, was watching some girls in a canoe when Rusty barked sharply, attracting the attention of all of them. One of the bobs was bobbing up and down rapidly.

“Reckon I’ll have that dog do my fishin’ for me,” said the Texan as he picked up the line. In another moment, a catfish weighing two pounds or more was flopping on the floor of the pavilion. Rusty, having learned a lesson at camp from a flopping fish, did not go near it, and watched it only a moment before returning to his patrol along the edge of the pavilion, for the fisherman had nine lines in the water, and Rusty knew they needed watching.

Rusty was reluctant to leave when, after a few minutes of explaining to Betty that what she knew at camp as a bullhead

or horned pout is known in the South as a catfish, ending with a promise to the Texan to return some time and fish with him, Mr. Abbott started for home. Usually interested in where they were going, Rusty this time hung out of the window, looking back at the fisherman. He decided right then and there that he would go fishing again. But he said nothing about it, so Betty and her father were in ignorance of his intention.

Seeing Mr. Travers at the woodpile which had so interested Rusty the night before, and where he had found the hen and the eggs that morning, the little spaniel dashed to join him as soon as he could escape from the car. Something was under that wood that Rusty wanted to know about.

He ran to the exact place at which he had caught the strange scent. Mr. Travers, who was removing boards at the other end of the pile, immediately went

around to him and bent down beside the little dog.

“ So this is where you found something, eh,” he said. “ I guess you had a black snake in there. He’s harmless, but he might frighten Betty, and we had better get rid of him.”

Rusty was too busy to pay attention to what was being said, and for the next hour he was still busier. He worked hard, tugging at the boards with Mr. Travers, growling and worrying each one as Mr. Travers piled them to one side in a neat arrangement. They had been in a disorderly heap where they had been thrown by workmen who had done some repair work on the cottage before the Abbotts arrived.

But after the very last board had been moved, there was no sign of anything alive except some bugs and grubs that always are to be found in such a place. In vain Rusty sniffed and snuffed every-

where before looking up with a much-puzzled air at Mr. Travers.

“ Oh, I believe you, all right, Rusty,” he said with a laugh. “ Something was under there all right last evening, and I still think it was a snake. He probably came out this morning, hunting for something to eat, and along late this afternoon when he hikes for home we may see him.”

That ended Mr. Travers's search for whatever it had been that had excited Rusty's curiosity. On the other side of the pile where Mrs. Webster's hen had been hiding her nest there was no longer a secret place. Mr. Travers told Rusty that the hen would be obliged to find a new nest. Rusty didn't understand then that his new friend had spoiled his first hunting-ground. He went over every foot of it again and again, his nose telling him plainly that something he didn't know and was sure he wouldn't like had been there.

Mr. Travers had gone to his rooms, leaving Rusty to his nosing around, when Betty called to him from the back porch to come to dinner. The sun was shining brightly on the back of the house as Rusty, a little tired from his exertions, trotted around to ask to be let in at the back screen door.

Still puzzled over the scent he had caught under the woodpile, he suddenly came upon it stronger than ever. He stopped to look around and to try the air with his nose. It came strongest from the direction of the steps, so he advanced slowly and cautiously until suddenly he caught sight of it.

Bracing himself he barked furiously as a long black snake that had been sunning itself on one of the steps slid off and disappeared under the house. Rusty's furious barking attracted all the family to the back porch, but there was nothing for them to see. Cautiously, Rusty moved

toward the steps, then tried to see behind them. What he couldn't see, his nose could smell, and he tried hard to tell the family that he had really discovered this time something alive that he didn't like.

Mr. Abbott came out and looked but, seeing nothing, picked up Rusty and carried him inside, where he stood at the back door and barked until told to keep quiet. After that, he growled deep down in his throat and looked an appeal to Mr. Abbott to believe that he had really seen something disturbing.

That afternoon when all were getting into the car for a ride, Betty told Mr. Travers what Rusty had done and explained that they had been unable to find anything. Mr. Travers promised to see what he could do while they were absent.

It was dusk when they returned and Mr. Abbott drove beyond the garage up to the door of the cottage, his headlights shining, when he stopped, directly on some

vines that clung to the fence dividing the Travers and Webster properties.

Rusty's keen eyes saw it first! He whined as he struggled with all his strength to escape from Betty's arms. A little brown rabbit was crouched under the vines directly in the glare of the headlights.

It was new game to Rusty. He did so want to see whether the animal would run and, if it would, whether he could catch it. But Betty kept tight hold of him.

"It's dark now and he might chase off some distance and get lost," her father said. "That rabbit probably lives around here, and we shall see him in the daylight. Then Rusty can have his chase after him. He couldn't catch him, and if he did, he wouldn't harm the animal."

So Rusty was forced to postpone his fun until the next morning when he was returning with Betty from the gate, where they had been to get the milk that was left



for them very early, and to see if the rural carrier had left any letters.

Rusty was carrying the morning paper carefully in his mouth, trotting along ahead of Betty, who, carrying the bottle of milk, was trying at the same time to open and read a letter from Jennie.

Under such circumstances it was not surprising that Betty did not understand why Rusty had suddenly dropped the paper—something he never did at home—and with a joyous “Yip, yip!”, his long ears flopping, was running as if his very life depended on his speed straight back through the grove.

She called sharply. Rusty was getting so that he didn't obey her, she decided, as she cried shrilly, “Rusty. Rusty! Come back here.”

But Rusty paid no attention. Ahead of him, bobbing up and down, was a little brown rabbit that Rusty could see was running faster than he was. He strained

every muscle in his effort to keep the flying form ahead of him in sight. When he reached the top of a slight rise in the ground, he could no longer see the object



HE STRAINED EVERY MUSCLE

of his chase, and was forced to depend on his nose.

Paying not the slightest attention to Betty's frantic calls, he raced along with his nose to the ground until he came to a brush heap. The trail ended there! He

circled around the pile, but only where he had followed the trail was there fresh scent. His quarry was in that heap!

He barked at it, but nothing happened. He scratched a few times at the ends of the twigs that stuck out, but that did no good. After a moment's thought, he decided that he would heed Betty's call and get some breakfast. He could do his hunting later.

Betty was angry—very angry. He trotted up to her, his tail telling her that she could see he was coming just as soon as he heard her call. But Betty didn't believe that message. Grabbing him by the collar she sat down on the sand and scolded and scolded, promising to tie him in the house all day the next time he ran away instead of obeying her call, as he always did at home.

Rusty listened with a bored expression, because he could not get away, but his mind was on some very interesting smells

wafted from the house. He was very hungry. The lecture over, he bounded away and at the back door asked to be admitted. There he caught that strange scent again, and went to the end of the steps where he had seen the snake disappear.

The scent was not nearly so strong as it had been before, certainly not so strong as the delicious odors that came to him from the kitchen, so he instantly obeyed Betty's impatient summons: "Come in here, you naughty dog." He dashed for Betty's seat, impatiently awaiting the appearance of the rest of the family at table. Everything was different, he reflected, from what it was in their other home. There he never left his bed until after Betty did. And Betty never by any chance got up until the very last minute that would give her time to eat breakfast and start for school on time. But in this new home, both of them were up and out

before breakfast, which certainly gave a small dog a tremendous appetite. But his big mistress was very, very slow in preparing his meals. After he had had his few bites with Betty, he was obliged to wait until Mrs. Abbott had finished her meal, and then wait still longer while she got his plate ready.

It was not until he had finished his first breakfast with Betty and had got down from his chair to beg Mrs. Abbott to please hurry and get a real meal for a hungry dog that he discovered Eliza in the kitchen. He heard some one move, and trotted to investigate.

Every one laughed at his joyful barks when he discovered a big colored woman, dressed almost exactly as Mandy dressed. He leaped up on her when she laughed and gurgled at him in the same language Mandy used to him. And there on the floor under the sink was his plate with his breakfast ready for him. Things were

being better managed, he decided, than they had been the evening before.

Not long after they had finished breakfast they all got into the automobile and once more drove to the city, where arrangements were made for Betty to go to school for the length of their stay in Lakeland. The school building was large and new, but Rusty was not allowed to meet the teacher or to see what the inside of the building looked like for, while Mrs. Abbott and Betty were making the arrangements, he was forced to remain in the car with his master.

After some errands had been completed, they drove home over the route they had taken the day before. Mr. Abbott called Mrs. Abbott's attention to the Texan leaning against the railing of the pavilion watching his lines. Rusty remembered, and plainly showed that he was disappointed that they were not to stop. He was very quiet the remainder of the

way home, trying to decide whether to go fishing or to give his attention to that pile of brush in the grove into which he had chased that strange animal before breakfast.

When they drove up to the front door, there on the other side of the fence were Maggie and Flossie, scolding in their high-pitched voices and ready to turn and run at the slightest sign of approach toward them.

Mr. and Mrs. Abbott both exclaimed at the sight of the pugs, for neither had seen one of that breed in many years. Rusty tumbled out with Betty and trotted to the fence, which was a signal for the pugs to retreat toward the safety of their kennel. Rusty could not get through the wire fence at that point, so contented himself with watching the two dogs.

Flossie seemed to show a disposition to make his closer acquaintance and came a few steps nearer, when Rusty lay down,

ears cocked with curiosity, and waited to see what would happen. Maggie, however, would have nothing to do with him at close range, and called her daughter away from the interloper.

Leaving Rusty still watching the pugs, the Abbotts entered the cottage, Mr. Abbott with his arms filled with bundles. The two pugs, with parting barks, gradually backed away, leaving Rusty with nothing interesting to do.

Just then a scent he had caught reminded him of the little brown rabbit, and he trotted around to the brush heap to resume his investigations and try to get another chase out of the rabbit.

Mr. Travers, coming up just then from the far end of the orchard where he had been working, was attracted by the growls and barks of the little spaniel. He called to him.

Rusty, remembering how his new friend had moved a woodpile to help him uncover

a scent, rushed to him and then back to the brush heap. Mr. Travers laughed and followed him.

“ I suppose you’ve got one of those little rabbits in there,” he said, “ but if you think I am going to move that pile of brush for you the way I did that pile of wood, you are very much mistaken.”

Rusty knew from the tone of his voice that he was to get no help this time. He rushed at the place into which the rabbit had disappeared and tried to dig away the sticks, whining with impatience.

“ Dig all you want to,” said Mr. Travers, “ but don’t look to me for help. If I turned that all over, the rabbit would get away from you and he would be back in the pile to-night. I wonder if you know that while you-all were away I killed that snake you found. I guess we had better not say anything about it, you and I, and then the women folks will not be frightened.”

Rusty said “Woof,” which Mr. Travers took as agreeing with him. The dog watched Mr. Travers move away and, after a few more quick digs at the pile, he turned and ran after him. He might have something interesting to do, Rusty thought, and so far the day had been very dull, with just an automobile ride and a rabbit chase. He stopped a moment to investigate the repiled wood, but no white hen was in sight, nor were there any eggs, and the other scent no longer attracted him.

He hurried to overtake this man who understood little dogs, and who didn't scold nor make him sit in the car while others went into buildings.

CHAPTER VI

RUSTY'S BLUE DAY

HIS family were getting to be regular scolds and faultfinders, Rusty decided, as he trotted after Mr. Travers. At home, where he had matters regulated to his own satisfaction, everything went along smoothly. Even up at camp, he had little difficulty in doing what he pleased, but down here where everything was new, and strange animals and new scents were everywhere; where a big good-natured man fished and needed his help, some one was always calling to him and preventing him from doing what he planned to do. He was decidedly dissatisfied with the way things were going in this new home of his.

Nothing he did suited any one but Mr.

Travers. He was a man who understood dogs exactly, as his family at home did once. By going along with him for a visit, he would make Betty sorry for having treated him like any ordinary dog instead of like the head of the family. She would hunt for him and call and call, and then, when he finally returned, she would be so glad that he would be able to forget the disagreeable things of the life in this new place.

With his plans all worked out satisfactorily, he was surprised to have Mr. Travers turn and tell him that he must go back to his home.

“You are doing too much running around in a strange place,” he said. “First thing you know, you’ll be lost, and then Betty will be heartbroken and you’ll be hungry and friendless. I’ll be glad to have you with me any time, but not unless your folks know where you are.”

All Rusty understood of that long

speech was that he was not wanted by this new friend. This man, whom he had regarded as a chum now that his family had turned against him, was ordering him to go home. He couldn't understand it. He did so much wish to see where he lived, and whether he kept anything to eat that little dogs liked. At the home of Jennie and Pauline there was always a bite of something especially good. In fact, now that he stopped to think about it, only in his own home was he refused something to eat between meals. He sat down to consider whether he would obey this last order. He was getting very tired of doing everything he was ordered to do by everybody.

Mr. Travers regarded him thoughtfully a moment before retracing his steps toward the front door of the Abbott cottage. Rusty merely turned his head clear around to make sure that he was not going to the brush pile. It was not yet

dinner time and there would be nothing to do in the house. Any man who had made friends with a dog ought to know that the dog wanted to see where he lived, and especially to learn whether he kept cookies or crackers in a tin box on the pantry shelf.

Mr. Travers did not look back, but walked straight to the front door and rang the bell. It was really very hard sitting with his head twisted almost off, so Rusty jumped up and raced after him. Perhaps Mr. Travers could be persuaded to go to that brush pile in the grove and stir out that rabbit for him! Rusty didn't know the name of the animal, but he knew it would run, and he was quite sure that he could catch it the next time.

As Mr. Travers was admitted to the house, Rusty dashed in. Just on the chance that the person who looked like Mandy and acted like her had not received instructions about feeding him between

meals, Rusty, after giving every one in the big room an opportunity to speak to him, trotted into the kitchen. Not a single member of the family had paid the slightest attention to him.

But Eliza spoke to him just as Mandy always did. She wanted to know where he had been. She admired him when he sat up and begged, exclaimed when he sneezed, and laughed heartily when he prayed, but that was all. Not a single morsel of food did she give him. Rusty promptly decided that it was the one day in his career when the world was entirely and completely against him. Without a moment's further waste of time he charged the screen door, only to get his nose scratched by the wire. For the first time in his experience the door was securely latched. Even the door was against him.

“ You better go an' ask de folks to let you out,” Eliza told him. “ I'ze got my

orders 'bout feedin' dogs an' 'bout lettin' 'em out. Go 'long now outen my kitchen. I'ze busy, I is, and I can't stan' 'round here watchin' you show off."

Rusty, licking his sore nose thoughtfully, sat there with his most injured air. Nobody cared the least little bit about him! When Betty had such blue days, he always sympathized with her. If he could only get out, there were the pugs and the rabbit to make him forget and—yes, there was that fisherman. He would welcome Rusty's help!

Getting out of the house was his immediate problem. At home, some one always let him out when he spoke softly at the door. He tried it but Eliza was adamant.

"Go long an' ask your folks," she said without looking around from her work. "Ef dey wants you to go out, dey'll open de do' for you."

Disconsolate, Rusty wandered into the

front room. The family were listening to hear Mr. Travers tell some story that greatly interested them, especially Betty, who was much excited. Rusty sought a little pity from his small mistress. Not only was he being badly treated, but his nose was scratched and sore. He sat down in front of her and said, "Woof," very, very softly.

But Betty took not the slightest notice. Her eyes were on Mr. Travers. She was giving every bit of her attention, so that nothing was left for her little dog. Rusty felt that keenly. He could not remember a time when Betty had not touched him or talked to him when he had spoken to attract her attention.

He heard the back door slam behind Eliza who had gone outside to the pump for water. Perhaps it would open for him now! Very quietly he walked to the kitchen, nosed the door carefully, and in another instant charged it and shot out

into the yard, scurried around the corner of the house and headed for the road.

Eliza, singing to herself and making a racket with the pump, did not hear the door. The others, hearing it, thought only that Eliza had gone out or come in. They had not yet discovered how Rusty left the house apparently whenever he desired. So intent were they on Mr. Traversers that no one missed the little dog.

Rusty paused near the door of Mr. Traversers's apartment. He was very curious about the appearance of the inside of the home of this man whom, until a few minutes before, he had thought understood dogs. Remembering that he had ordered him home instead of inviting him in, Rusty's ill temper again was uppermost. He trotted to the entrance of the grove, looked longingly to the right, wondering what was to be found in that direction, then resolutely turned his nose to the left and—headed for the fisherman.

It proved to be much farther away than he had remembered, for an automobile travels much faster than a little dog can run. On foot, he was closer to the scents he caught now from the edge of the lake and which strongly tempted him to stop and investigate what might be in the long grass between the highway and the water. But fishing was uppermost in his mind, and he hesitated only once or twice.

The snake birds, with their abnormally long necks, which they stretched and twisted into all sorts of shapes as they stood perched on sticks that stuck up out of the water, were very tempting. He had not had time really to observe them while in the automobile. He found that one sharp bark sent them flying away, so he lost only a little time on his way to the Texan.

He trotted along at a steady pace without paying the slightest attention to passing automobiles, the occupants of more

than one of which called to him. One driver stopped his car and asked him where he was going and where his master was. Rusty merely glanced up at him without slackening his pace. "Guess he's going home," the driver laughed, as he threw in his clutch and went on his way.

Catching sight of the pavilion in the distance, Rusty increased his pace, although his tongue was hanging out because he had trotted a long distance on a very hot day. The Texan, humming softly to himself, did not see or hear the little dog that trotted on to the floor of the pavilion.

Rusty's first thought was of a drink. He went directly to the landing place where there was no railing and by lying down was able to reach the water that was almost on a level with the floor. My, he was thirsty! So very thirsty was he that he did not stop drinking to acknowledge the astonished greeting of the big man

in the big hat when he happened to see him.

“Where’d you-all come from?” asked the Texan, staring at the little dog, then turning to look up and down the highway for the dog’s master or mistress. “Where’s your master? Did you run ahead of him?”

His thirst satisfied for the time being, Rusty got to his feet, his tail wagging vigorously in greeting. “Woof,” he said softly before turning to his inspection of the lines and their gently bobbing floats. No need now for the fisherman to watch them. Rusty would do that, and let him know the moment there was anything doing in the fishing world.

The big friendly man watched him closely for a minute or two as he hummed softly to himself.

“He said he had come down from the North,” he said to himself, “and was goin’ to spend the winter in a cottage on

this lake." His gaze roved along the shore as he wondered which one of many homes around that three-mile drive might be the temporary abiding-place of the family from the North.

"Said this dog run the house," he chuckled, "but I reckon this time he's jes' run away. Seems as if he said he'd come some day and go fishin' with me, but I don't see ary a sign of him. Now I'd like to know what I'm goin' to do with that dog. Come here and let me read your collar," he ordered, addressing Rusty, just then engaged in closely watching one of the floats that seemed to be a trifle more animated than the others.

Rusty turned his head at the command, hesitated while he took one more look at the float, then walked obediently to his companion and stood patiently while he tried to read the inscription engraved on his collar.

"Can't see to read it that far away,"

the Texan said in disgust, "an' I'm too fat to bend down," he added with a chuckle. "You'll have to come up here." Saying which he picked up Rusty, dodged a caress from his tongue and managed to decipher the name and address.

"Abbott. Arthur Abbott," he read aloud. "That's the name. The address don't do no good down here. Can't be livin' far from here, seems so, for this dog to find his way here. An' I remember they drove that way," he mused looking down the highway along which Rusty had come. "Well, I'll wait a spell an' see if they come lookin' for him. I ain't much on long walks," he concluded with another chuckle as he put Rusty down.

Seeing that the big Texan had no further interest in him, Rusty resumed his watch over the lines. What little breeze there had been had died down. The surface of the lake was like a mirror. Rusty stretched out on the very edge of the pa-

vilion panting in the heat but keeping a watchful eye on the lines.

Once or twice he glanced up at his friend, leaning against the railing humming softly. The man's eyes were on the little spaniel, but Rusty could see they were kindly eyes. He didn't mind being watched. Finally he dozed off, only to be aroused by the rattling of a paper. He saw that his friend was preparing to eat something. My, how hungry Rusty was!

He hadn't realized it before, but it had been a very long time since breakfast, and he had traveled a long distance. He got quickly to his feet to sit up and beg.

The Texan munched steadily on a huge bite of a big sandwich that he had taken from the paper.

"That's an old trick," he said to Rusty. "Every dog knows that. Out on my ranch I wouldn't have a dog that couldn't do more'n that for a bite of a cold snack."

It was very hot and Rusty was tired,

but it was plain to him that he must go through with his tricks before this man would give him anything to eat. He sneezed.

“Uh, huh, that’s another real common trick,” said the fisherman taking another huge bite of his sandwich. “Prob’ly if you was home where you belong, you’d ’ave had two bites by now.” He continued to chew while he looked steadily at the little dog.

Rusty spoke very softly. The man only shook his head solemnly.

Walking to the railing, because there was no chair there, Rusty sat up, stuck his nose between his paws and offered prayer. He was beginning to lose faith in the efficacy of prayer as a means to obtain food, because Mandy long since had refused to let it tempt her to feed him between meals, and this new Mandy just laughed. But it was worth trying on a stranger who was eating.



RUSTY OFFERED PRAYER

“Well,” the Texan said at last, “I dunno but it seems as if you’d ought to get a bite for that prayer. It was a long ’un, and you look sort o’ petered out.”

Rusty peeked because no one said, “Amen,” which was the way his prayer should end, he had been taught. Only a very small piece of bread remained in sight. He was so hungry and tired and

no one cared the least little bit about a spaniel to-day. He was very forlorn.

The fisherman continued to watch him, his brows puckered as he considered what ought to be done. "If he was Sarah's dog, she'd be cryin' her eyes out and thinkin' all sorts o' things had happened to him. But it's awful hot, and maybe I'd have to walk a mile or two. Then I might not find where he lived. All right," he said to Rusty. "Your prayer's answered. Here's a bite, just to show there ain't no hard feelin's, 'cause it seems as if you was prayin' for something to eat, and not for your folks."

Rusty gobbled the bit of bread and meat held down to him, his tail expressing his gratitude, and his hope that the paper bag contained more of the same with which his friend would not be selfish.

But this big man slowly tied a string around whatever was left in the paper and dropped it into a big pocket with a sigh.

“Better hang on to the rest a while,” he said to Rusty. “Maybe we got a long walk ahead o’ us, an’ it’s hotter’n the inside o’ Sarah’s oven when she’s bakin’. Dunno’s I ever see it any hotter.” He looked down the highway. “Maybe I could get some feller to give us a lift,” he said aloud. “But if you don’t know your new home, we’d drive right past it. I don’t know none of the folks that live down that way, but I s’pose we could stop an’ ask som’ers.”

All this soft-spoken talk was Greek to Rusty. But it was plain that all he was going to get to eat was one little piece of bread and meat. He wished he were home. In all his life, he had never known such an unsatisfactory day as this. It seemed to him as if he hadn’t a friend in the world.

It never occurred to him what might be the feelings of Betty and the rest of his family. His mind was entirely on the

fact that he was hungry, and that this friend who liked to fish and who liked little dogs had food that he had eaten, and more that he had put in a pocket, while a little spaniel had begged hard for something for his empty stomach.

Dejectedly he sat there, his eyes pleading with his friend to give a poor starving little dog just one bite of something. He allowed himself to be picked up and tucked under one arm as his friend, after one last look at his lines, slowly started from the pavilion for the highway.

The sun beat down, and not a breath of air stirred. Rusty wanted another drink of water. He wriggled to be allowed to get down and get one. But the big man held him comfortably without hurting him and walked very slowly.

“ This is one of those days when it ain't goin' to do me a bit o' good to walk much in this sun,” his friend told Rusty. “ I'll have to take a chance on catchin' a ride.

If I don't get one, I'll take him home to daughter's and keep him till we see an advertisement 'bout him. Abbott'll never let this dog get away without tryin' to find him."

He stopped short as an idea struck him. "Seems as if he might come here lookin' for him," he muttered. He stood for some minutes considering his next move until the driver of a touring car, seeing him, stopped and asked if he could give him a lift. "Pretty hot to walk," he said.

The big Texan told the story of Rusty, and the two men, strangers but both dog-lovers, considered what should be done. Finally they agreed that they would drive along slowly and see if the dog recognized his home. If that failed, they would then decide on the next move.

Rusty was delighted to be taken in the car. Even on this day when everything had made him unhappy he could find pleasure in riding. He settled down com-

fortably in the arms of his friend. "Woof," he said to show that he was ready.

The driver passed the first three houses without slowing down. He knew the families in them, he said. He stopped in front of a small cottage, but Rusty's only response was a request to drive along. As they rounded a curve, Rusty barked lustily and squirmed to be freed of the huge hands that held him.

"Reckon as how he thinks he's gettin' home," observed the Texan. "Seems as if he's gettin' a leetle nervous and excited."

Rusty was, because from somewhere back in the grove he could hear the three notes of his master's whistle and Betty's tearful calling: "Rusty. Rusty. Hi, Rusty. Where are you?"

"'Pears like they're callin' you, little fellow," his big friend said as the driver pulled to the side of the highway and

stopped at the entrance. Rusty stretched quickly and caught his friend unawares with a grateful kiss from a very moist tongue.

In another instant he had leaped from the automobile and was racing toward the rear of the grove, those big ears of his flopping and his feet barely touching the ground. Nothing was wrong with his world just then, for he had come back to hear his folks calling him as if they really wanted him, and he was racing to them.

CHAPTER VII

RUSTY MEETS PIGGY

As Rusty came within sight of Betty he yipped a greeting and leaped into her arms, causing her to drop to the ground with tears of joy in her eyes. She alternately hugged and scolded him, demanding to know where he had been, and if he did not realize that they all had been "nearly crazy" because they feared he had been killed or stolen.

Mr. Abbott, hurrying from farther back in the grove, said nothing as he watched them, but he swallowed hard once or twice before responding to his wife's anxious inquiry from the house, telling her that they had found him, or that he had found them. He walked toward an automobile that had been driven into the yard.

Rusty saw it also, and as soon as he could squirm from Betty's encircling arms he dashed to introduce Mr. Abbott to his rescuers, although Rusty was unwilling to admit that he had been rescued. He was confident that he would have found his way back to them, just as he had found his way to the fisherman.

Betty, too, hurried to the car to hear the friendly Texan tell about his visit from her pet.

"I reckoned," he said, "that 'twould be just as well to keep him hungry, 'cause 'most any dog will go where it's fed unless he's too far lost. Seems as if he figgered I was pretty stingy with my lunch, 'cause he did a lot of prayin' over me, but I guess this young lady'll see he gets suthin' to eat."

Betty thanked him for his kindness to her dog and promised that his hunger would be satisfied. The driver of the car, who had introduced himself as Mr. Rob-

bins, with his home farther down the road near the end of the lake, told Betty that he had a pet goat that she would like to see. When the whole story had been told and both gentlemen had declined to remain to dinner, they drove off, leaving the family very thankful that Rusty had fallen into such understanding hands.

Rusty, delighted to be back once more with his folks and not considering that his personally conducted expedition had frightened them, rushed to Mrs. Abbott on the piazza and demonstrated his affection for her so effusively that she did very little scolding.

Dinner was a very solemn meal. Rusty could understand that they were discussing him, but he was too deeply interested in obtaining every possible bite from Betty to give his attention to their plans for him. He had worked off his fit of the blues, and was quite ready to resume his usual relations with all members of the

family whether they were quite ready to forgive him or not.

It was not until after he had finished the last scrap of his real meal in the kitchen, and had hastily turned off a few tricks for Eliza in the hope of getting a "second helping," that he thought again of the rabbit. Finding the back door unlatched, he charged it and was outside before the bang of the door revealed his method of escape from the house to the members of the family.

A combined shout from every one including Eliza, who had been accused unjustly of letting him out, caused Rusty to stop on his way to the brush pile.

"Now we know how he gets away!" exclaimed Mr. Abbott hurrying into the kitchen and examining the latch. "We'll fix that at once, and then perhaps we shall be able to prevent this rascal from going fishing without permission. Where are you going now?" he demanded of the dog.

That sounded like old times, Rusty thought. He barked engagingly, wiggled all over, and in every way known to an intelligent dog invited company.

Mr. Abbott, who was still a little provoked over the morning escapade, hesitated but yielded to Betty's suggestion that they go and see whatever it was that interested Rusty in the grove. Together they followed him to the brush pile, where, by the time they reached it, the little dog was whining and digging at the brush.

They tried to peer into the tangled mass, but could see nothing. Mr. Abbott remembered enough of his boyhood to guess what was hidden in there, but, like Mr. Travers the day before, he declined to move the pile to uncover a rabbit. Instead, he suggested that they all take a ride, reminding Betty that in another day or two she would be in school and, except on Saturdays and Sundays, there would not be time for long rides.

That is how it came about that Mrs. Abbott bought a gourd, used in the poorer families of the country districts of the South as a dipper from which to drink, and it is how it came about that Rusty discovered that little black spaniels are not the only pets that do about as they please in houses where they have been made welcome.

After consulting Mr. Travers as to a good route to take, they started off, telling Eliza that they would not be back until dark and that she need not stay to get dinner for them. It was just as well that they told her that, for she would have had a long time to wait to have cooked dinner for them that night.

It was new country through which they drove, and Rusty, tired as he was from his adventure of the morning, found much to interest him. Miles after they had passed through one pretty town and miles before they reached the next, they had a punc-

ture. It was the first mishap they had experienced in all their long journey.

Not far ahead of them was a cabin, a little larger than those ordinarily occupied by negroes. Mr. Abbott decided to drive to that cabin where it would be possible to get a drink of water—several drinks, in fact, for every one was thirsty.

As they stopped, Betty exclaimed at the queer things that were hanging in trees and on poles near the cabin. Her mother explained that they were gourds from which the seeds and pulp had been removed that the shells might be left to dry for various uses. Some of them were used for drinking cups, she said, others were left in the trees for martins to make their nests in, and still others were used for almost any purpose that a china or earthen dish would be.

Mr. Abbott sounded the horn, and a powerfully built man, with a heavy beard and hair that had not been cut for months,

appeared from the shade in the rear of the cabin, while a woman and several children came to the door in open-mouthed wonder at the unexpected visitors. The woman and the children were barefooted, and Betty secretly envied them.

After Mr. Abbott had explained what had occurred and the desires of the family for cooling drink, they were invited cordially to "come right in." Betty and Rusty jumped out, Mrs. Abbott following more slowly.

Rusty was the first to investigate the interior of the cabin, disappearing inside just before two big, gaunt hounds came around from the rear of the cabin. The next instant there was a great clattering of tiny feet inside, and some excited barking from Rusty.

Not knowing what to expect, but fearing for her pet, Betty dashed for the door, only to fall heavily as a small but very fat little pig, white as snow and squealing at

the top of his voice, shot between her legs, and raced for the shelter of the brush near by.

Rusty leaped over his little mistress, barking gleefully and unmindful of the



RUSTY LEAPED OVER HIS LITTLE MISTRESS

calls of Mrs. Abbott. But he stopped instantly at the sight of the two big hounds, growling deep in their throats. With one longing glance where the pig had disappeared, still squealing, the little spaniel

hurried to the protection of his big mistress.

The man, much amused at Rusty's retreat, spoke sharply to his two dogs, and two barefooted children darted after their squealing pet. It was all very confusing for a moment, especially to Betty, who didn't quite understand what had happened.

But by the time Betty had scrambled to her feet and had discovered that Rusty was safe with her mother and that the big dogs were obediently lying down at their master's feet, she had managed to raise a smile, for every one else was enjoying a hearty laugh, not so much at Betty, but at the whole string of happenings.

The mother of the children had gone to the kitchen for water and was not an eyewitness of the events that caused the laughter on the part of the others. With a pail brimming with water in one hand and a long-handled gourd in the other, she

was so puzzled over the actions of the others that explanations had to be made and apologies offered for Rusty's behavior.

She immediately laid the blame for everything on the little pig. "The younguns found it a few weeks ago down at the edge of the ma'sh, and they brought it to the house," she said. "Now he's got to be a reg'lar bother, round under foot all the time pesterin' me when I'm busy. But the children won't hear to turnin' him out, and I dunno's he'd stay out if we tried to do it. I can't for the life o' me see what's goin' ter happen when he's grow'd up. There ain't no room for him in here now, and he ain't big yet."

Explanations made and the cooling drinks enjoyed, Mrs. Abbott and Betty were invited into the house out of the sun to wait while the men were changing the tire. Mrs. Abbott gladly accepted and, as she told her husband several hours later,

she had never been in a room where soap and water had been used so effectively.

“That plain board floor actually shone,” she said. “It is no wonder that little pig skidded when he tried to run on that floor.”

Betty followed her mother into the house, and soon was playing with two of the older children, looking appealingly at her mother as the children displayed for her entertainment the meagre assortment of dolls and toys that were their treasures.

Rusty, after satisfying himself that there were no more pigs to chase, made friends with the younger children, and soon was romping with them and a fox terrier that had appeared from somewhere, while Mrs. Abbott discussed gourds with the mother of the children.

Meanwhile Mr. Abbott and Mr. Brackley—for that was the name of the owner of the cabin—had changed the tire, and Mr. Abbott attempted to start the engine.

To his surprise, it refused to work. For an hour he fussed with it. He was no mechanic, and Mr. Brackley said that if the engine were a mule he would know it was pure cussedness, but he was just as ignorant of machinery as Mr. Abbott.

The nearest garage was six miles ahead and it was getting late in the afternoon. When it was evident that they were not to be able to start the engine, Mr. Brackley had his small son mount one of his mules and ride to the next town to get a mechanic. Mr. Abbott wrote a note giving the name of the car and explaining as well as he could what was the trouble.

The two children who had gone into the marsh after their pet had long before returned with it. Inside the cabin, Rusty was being held securely in Betty's arms while all watched the fox terrier and the pig play on the floor. The dog and the pig had been playmates for weeks, and they amused Mrs. Abbott and Betty so

much that neither realized that it had taken a great deal of time to change one tire. It was not until Mr. Abbott entered and reported that he had been obliged to send for a repair man that Betty discovered it was very late and that she was very hungry.

Mrs. Brackley upon hearing the news promptly said that they must all remain for supper and, although Mrs. Abbott protested that they would wait until they reached home, her objections were brushed aside.

Rusty heartily approved of the speed with which the strange woman and three of the older children got a meal of fried salt pork, boiled potatoes, cream gravy, and corn pone. He had been released by Betty as he and the fox terrier proved friendly, and Mr. Abbott declared he hadn't had so much fun since he went to a circus.

The pig, offered a bit of something to

eat, would grab it and, grunting and squealing, start on a run with his playmate close behind and Rusty bringing up the rear. Much practice had taught the pig that by running close to the wall he could turn corners without much skidding, but the fox terrier and Rusty, while they gained rapidly on the straight runs, lost all they had gained when they tried to turn the corners, dig in their claws as they would.

Mr. Abbott laughed until his eyes ran with tears, and from the stove where she was preparing the meal, Mrs. Brackley smiled rather grimly and explained that much of every day she spent with pig and dog racing around the room, except when they both got so tired that they slept.

It hadn't seemed possible to Betty that so many people would be able to eat at the same time, but they managed it, because several of the children took their food and sat on the doorsteps, sharing bits of it

with the pig and the terrier, just as Betty shared some of her meal with Rusty.

It was late in the evening before the trouble with the engine had been located and repairs made. The Brackleys would not accept pay for the excellent meal, or even for the favor of the boy's long ride for aid. Mrs. Brackley had insisted upon giving Mrs. Abbott several of the gourds she had admired, and when the Abbotts finally left, it was with the promise of another call in the near future.

Rusty and Betty, after a few miles, cuddled down and slept all the long way home. Rusty's twitching legs gave plain evidence that in his dreams he was enjoying a chase after a little pig that in turn was being chased by a friendly little fox terrier.

Neither of them heard of plans Betty's father and mother made for the second visit to the Brackleys.

CHAPTER VIII

RUSTY SHOWS OFF

RUSTY and the Abbott family awakened the next morning to the first Sunday in their winter home. Rusty and Betty were first up, in spite of the warning of Betty's mother that it was her last chance to lie abed, because the next morning would find her attending school. Even that prospect could not keep Betty and her pet in bed, with the tempting song of the mocking bird coming in through the open windows from the pecan tree.

On their return from the gate with the milk Mr. Travers, who was standing in the door of his apartment, told Betty that if they cared to do so they could leave Rusty with him while they attended church.

“Would you like that, Rusty?” Betty asked.

“Woof,” said Rusty, meaning of course he would, especially if he were allowed to visit in his house. To confirm what he had said, he wiggled his way to Mr. Travers and accepted a petting. Who could tell but that he might be willing to help get that rabbit?

So in spite of the fact that Rusty had never been known to allow the automobile to leave him behind without making a fuss, this particular Sunday morning, seated on the ground beside Mr. Travers who gently played with one ear, he watched without even one little whine Mr. Abbott drive away with all those he loved best. But no sooner had the machine disappeared around the bend in the highway than he leaped at Mr. Travers, demanding that he do something to pay a little dog for having behaved so well when his folks drove away and left him behind.

“All right, sir. I get the idea,” Mr. Travers assured him. “Just what shall we do first?”

To Rusty, that was the most foolish of questions. So long as they did something and kept on doing something else, Mr. Travers was welcome to begin with whatever he preferred. Rusty danced and leaped in front of him saying plainly in dog language, “Come on. Let’s get started doing something.”

Mr. Travers was paying no attention to Rusty’s begging. Instead, he was looking up in a grapefruit tree that stood near his door. After some moments he moved toward his apartment.

That suited Rusty. Ever since his first meeting with this friend, he had wanted to see where he lived. He raced ahead, turning to look back at nearly every jump.

The fact that Mr. Travers was talking to a bird made no difference to the little

black spaniel. He leaped up at the door impatiently. No man of any intelligence would be taking a dog into his home unless there was something to eat in there.

He dashed into the big living-room and into the bedroom, giving merely a cursory glance and sniff as he hurried along. He planned a more thorough inspection after the lunch that he was certain would be given to him.

He watched with every evidence of approval while his friend reached up to a shelf for some small bit of what Rusty was certain must be food. But it wasn't offered to him. Whatever it was, Mr. Travers put it in his mouth and immediately went outside, leaving the door open for Rusty to follow or not as he pleased.

That presented a problem. It was really necessary for his peace of mind to look into every nook and corner of this friend's home, and at the same time it was important to know what was going on

outside, especially with Mr. Travers having something in his mouth. People didn't put in their mouths what was not good to eat, Rusty knew, even while remembering that some folks ate things like pickled beets that no self-respecting dog would eat. After having been caught once with a slice of pickled beet, Rusty had learned to take a hasty sniff before depending on Betty's judgment of what was thoroughly tasty and satisfying.

With a hasty sniff at the covering of a very tempting couch, and a quick stand on his hind legs to see if there were pillows there to curl up against, he hurried to the door to keep an eye on Mr. Travers. For once in his life, Rusty was so astonished that he was struck absolutely motionless!

On Mr. Travers's shoulder, pecking away at whatever it was that his friend held in his mouth, was a perfectly gorgeous bird. He was red all over, with a topknot that nodded back and forth. Up

at camp, Rusty had seen a chipmunk and a squirrel dash up on the piazza and grab crumbs and run away, but never had he seen a bird feeding from a man's shoulder.

He couldn't be expected to remain silent long, for he believed in applauding when applause was due. In a moment he yipped with delight, and leaped up at Mr. Travers with low barks at the performance he seemed to think was being staged for his express benefit.

Instantly the gorgeous bird, that Mr. Travers told him was a redbird, flew to the top of the tree where he warbled "Pretty. Pretty. Pretty. Pretty." Then he plumed his feathers, which really didn't need any attention, that Rusty might be impressed with him.

Rusty was doubtful for a moment whether he would be scolded for having caused the bird to fly away, but his friend paid no attention to him. Taking whatever it was that he had held in his mouth,

he walked to the tree, placed what was left carefully on a limb, and then closed the door to his rooms.

“Now we'll go walking,” he said, turning away. “I had to stop and give my redbird his morning lunch of a nut, or he would have thought I had deserted him. He'll get used to having you around before long, and won't take much notice of you.”

Knowing that they were on their way to somewhere, Rusty paid not the slightest attention to what was said to him. Actions always told him more than words. It was plain to Rusty that they were headed for the brush pile in the grove, the hiding-place of that animal that could run faster than he could. Sure enough, Mr. Travers walked right toward it. Before he reached it, however, Rusty was whining and digging where he had seen that brown hopping animal disappear.

“You might as well learn that you

never will be able to dig a rabbit out of a brush heap, or a stone wall, either," Mr. Travers said, smiling at the frantic efforts of the little dog.

"Here," he called. "There he goes now, out of his back door. See him!" Mr. Travers pointed toward the break in the fence through which they had gone with the basket of eggs.

It was an instant or two before Rusty caught sight of the rabbit. Then with a joyous bark he was off in pursuit. Mr. Travers laughed and sauntered along to where in the neighboring orchard he could see Mr. Webster inspecting his trees. Mr. Travers was in no haste, even if Rusty was, and the rabbit in even more of a hurry.

Seeing Mr. Webster and hearing the sudden snippy barks of Flossie from behind her master, the rabbit turned sharply to the right. Rusty cut across lots, but, run as he might, the rabbit gained on him,

turned again, and in another minute was safely back in the brush pile with Rusty barking and whining and digging at the almost invisible hole into which bunny had scurried.

Mr. Travers, who had paused to watch the finish of the chase, whistled for Rusty and continued his leisurely way to join Mr. Webster, who had been equally interested in the sight of a black spaniel trying to overtake a healthy bunny.

Satisfied that he was to receive no aid from his friend in once more getting that hopping creature out where he could chase him, and hearing the excited barking of Flossie, Rusty went to the rescue of his ally, for he was by no means certain but that he might need to be rescued from the pug. Rusty had never had a fight with another animal, but one thing was certain in his mind, no dog was going to attack a friend of his without having an argument with Rusty.

Panting a little from his run, Rusty reached Mr. Travers, between whom and Mr. Webster Flossie was barking furiously and defiantly. The little spaniel sat down, looking up at his friend as if a trifle ashamed of himself for having wasted energy because of the barking of a foolish and ignorant puppy. Rusty looked everywhere but at Flossie.

The two men understood dogs, and both knew that Rusty had discovered that his services were not needed. Flossie gradually ceased her barking, only now and then bursting out with a single sharp yelp to notify Rusty that she was still there and knew that intruders were on her property.

Talk about picking and marketing oranges and grapefruit was of no interest to Rusty. He made one or two advances to Flossie to play with him, but that animal, naturally lazy and already burdened with fat, told him to go along about his

own business, although she was by no means so cross as she had been.

It was this attitude of Flossie that sent Rusty trotting back to the brush pile. He was able to find some fun there when everything else failed to interest him. So intent was he on nosing at one of the entrances bunny had to his home, whining a little to himself in his eagerness to catch sight of the thing that would run when in the open field, that he failed to notice that he had a companion, until, turning to see that the two men were still wasting a lot of good time talking about fruit, he was surprised to see Flossie.

The puppy with a tail that curled tight in a little coil over her back was watching him, her feet braced prepared to run, but curious to know what this strange black dog was doing. Flossie had been brought up by her mother to do nothing, and to let no one induce her to run and play. But somehow, with her mother away with her

mistress, she found Rusty and his racing around very interesting.

But her mother had told her not to associate with other animals, because pugs were a superior race of dogs, so Flossie backed away when Rusty turned around. But she didn't bark that snippy bark.



HE WENT THROUGH MORE ACROBATICS

She just growled a very little growl that delighted Rusty. He growled at her, crouched down and dodged and ran a few steps, the usual preliminaries to playing with anybody or anything.

Flossie didn't know what to make of such actions, but she growled a tiny growl

again to see if the black dog would do anything else. He yipped very softly and went through more acrobatics, to show off before the little lady.

And before she knew what she was doing, Flossie was clumsily trying to imitate him. This sent Rusty racing here and there, but always coming back in front of her. It was very warm, and Flossie was chunky and not used even to the little exercise she had taken. She panted and lay down. Rusty instantly dropped flat in front of her. It was warm, he decided, and he was very thirsty.

It was this tableau that the two men saw as they strolled toward the brush heap. It interested Mr. Webster very much. "I never knew a dog of Flossie's breed to make friends with a dog of another kind on such short acquaintance," he said.

Mr. Travers thought that Rusty would make friends with any one or anything

but, possibly, Maggie. He didn't believe, he said, that even Rusty could get into the good graces of the older pug.

Seeing that the dogs were very thirsty, the men walked to the rear of the Abbott cottage to the pump, where Mr. Travers pumped some cold water into a tin basin that had been placed there for Rusty's benefit. Rusty rushed to it and noisily lapped the water, while Flossie, just as thirsty as Rusty, stood a short distance away and looked longingly at the water.

Pausing for breath Rusty seemed to see her for the first time and to remember his manners. Licking his mouth he backed away and seated himself. Flossie took a step nearer the tempting cold water. Rusty rolled his eyes up at the two men as much as to say, "Did you ever see any one so slow as she is? Here I am waiting for her to get a drink so I may finish quenching my own thirst."

At last Flossie mustered her courage

and took a few hasty laps before looking up and backing away, as if expecting an attack by the larger dog. Again Rusty rolled his eyes to express his utter disgust.

“The first thing I know, Flossie will have a playfellow and Maggie will be furious,” said Mr. Webster with a quiet smile. Mr. Travers nodded his assent. Whatever he intended to have replied was not said, for at that moment Eliza came to the back door, and Rusty promptly spoke for something to eat.

Cook was so astonished at the sight of the little pug that she exclaimed to Rusty, “Where’d you get dat dog you got wid you? I d’clar’ to goodness you’ll be bringin’ de whole neighborhood here for victuals ’fore we knows it. I b’lieve I’ll give ’em jes’ a leetle snack.”

She looked inquiringly at the two men. “Not more than a bite,” said Mr. Webster. “We don’t feed dogs between meals, although you’d think to look at

Flossie that she ate all the time. Besides that, you'll have her here right along, begging for a handout."

Eliza showed all her teeth in a broad grin, and went into the kitchen to get something. When she opened the screen door on her return, Rusty rushed up the steps and on to the porch. But Flossie held her ground and looked longingly.

Eliza called her, but Flossie was afraid. She had done a great deal that morning that was much out of the ordinary for her. Going into a strange house was a little too much to ask.

Impatient to have what Eliza had got for him and utterly forgetting his companion, Rusty whirled from one to another of his tricks, only Mr. Webster apparently watching him.

Eliza, holding the door open with one hand and with the other trying to tempt the little pug to climb the steps to her, was astonished to have Rusty slip by her,

grab the bit of cracker she held, and bound down the steps.

Flossie, not understanding, turned tail and ran a few steps with a quick bark of fright. "Well, I 'clare," Eliza exclaimed indignantly, "you is gettin' more grabby every day you libs." The two men laughed heartily.

Rusty, in his haste to bolt the morsel he had seized, dropped a small piece of it on the ground. He looked at Flossie to invite her to eat it, and backed away.

Flossie, like Rusty, did love to eat, and she had no apparent fear of putting on flesh as so many young girls have. But she hesitated. Rusty poked the bit of cracker with his nose, and again backed away, looking up at the men as if to ask them if there was anything he could do to convince her that she was welcome to the food.

Something moving in the orchard just then caught his eye. "Yip, yip!" he

barked. "There's that rabbit. Come on." He raced down through the grove.

Flossie, after her momentary fright at Rusty's sudden bark, caught up the morsel of cracker and, with a high-pitched imitation of Rusty's bark of delight, chased after him to the delighted "Yah, yah!" of Eliza and the more subdued laughter of the men.

"That rabbit and a few others have been around here for some time," Mr. Webster said. "Now that Rusty has come, they are going to have one very busy time."

They moved toward the pile, where Flossie was making just as much noise as Rusty and trying to imitate him in digging at the ends of the brush with her little forefeet.

From the Webster home came the barking of Maggie, just returned with her mistress. It came nearer and nearer.

"Now we'll see what will happen," Mr.

Webster chuckled. "Maggie won't like this at all."

Flossie, pausing to get her breath, heard for the first time her mother's indignant voice. She hesitated, gave a happy reply and, with a longing look at Rusty and the brush pile, trotted toward her outraged parent.

Rusty, happy over having acquired a playmate, trotted after her, but stopped at the furious challenge of the angry mother.

When Flossie, seeing how matters stood, turned and joined her mother in scolding, Rusty sat down. "Well, what do you think of that for shabby treatment?" his low growl said plainly. "Here I got her a drink, gave her something to eat, played with her, and showed her where that hopping animal hides, and now she turns against me."

The men, knowing just what his feelings were, laughed a little. "Come on,

Rusty," Mr. Travers called. "We'll go down to my rooms and see if there is anything interesting down there."

Grumbling to himself and looking back every few steps, Rusty followed his friend, and in five minutes, having completed a thorough painstaking inspection of every corner of the rooms, curled up on the couch with two big sofa pillows at his back to take a well-earned nap and to dream of rabbits and pug dogs, neither of which knew how to treat a fellow decently.

CHAPTER IX

RUSTY PUZZLES HIS MASTER

A LITTLE ashamed because he had slept so soundly on Mr. Travers's couch that his family had returned from church without his knowledge, Rusty, after Betty had called to get him, resolved to stick close to his folks for the rest of the day at least.

From Mr. Travers, Betty learned of Rusty's adventure with Flossie. She did not think very much of pug dogs. She said they were homely and disagreeable, and she couldn't understand, she told Rusty, how he could have anything to do with them.

When Betty reported at the dinner table what Rusty had been doing, her mother suggested that Rusty since leav-

ing home had had very little play. They had all been too busy and too interested in new scenes to give him the attention he had been accustomed to have, and Betty as yet had no playmates to help entertain Rusty. Dogs, like girls, her mother said, liked playmates, and Rusty had done his best to amuse himself.

That gave Mr. Abbott his opportunity once more to bewail the fact that he had bought the dog for himself, and had hardly ever had him for more than a minute at a time. He announced that Rusty need look no farther than his own master for some one to play with, because now that they were settled for the winter and he had no business to attend to, he would have nothing else to do but play with his dog.

Betty reminded her father, as she caught up Rusty for one of those quick hugs and kisses he was accustomed to receive without any apparent reason, that

she had always said dogs should have some man to chum with part of the time. She pretended to whisper to Rusty that he would soon get tired of being around with only a man, and would come back to her.

Rusty kissed her, accepted a bit of bread, licked his mouth carefully, and patiently awaited the next morsel.

“So it’s all arranged, Rusty,” said Mr. Abbott. “Beginning to-morrow while Betty is in school and her mother is fussing around the house or doing errands or something, you and I will get some exercise. One thing we will do is to walk around the lake before it gets too hot. Then you and I will go up to the club house, where they bowl on the lawn, and see what good we are at that game. And who knows but that we shall go golfing some day!”

It was plain to Rusty that at last some one was to pay some attention to him.

Except at camp, he never had much time with his master. He didn't understand exactly what they were to do, but anything that promised excitement suited the little dog. His tail said so plainly. He was ready to start then, and tried to induce his master to move.

But every one found the weather that day very hot and, as they were not thoroughly rested from their long ride, before Rusty knew it they were all taking naps; even Betty, who always objected to resting except when she went to bed at night.

Rusty, having had his nap on Mr. Travers's couch, was inclined to be provoked when they all went to sleep. He looked about for something to do. Eliza had the afternoon off, so she was not there to talk to him. He found the back door securely latched. Standing there wondering what to do with himself until his master should be ready to play, he saw something move far down in the grove.

He stood up, paws against the door, to see better. His right forepaw touched the latch and his weight against the door swung it open, very much to the surprise of a certain black spaniel. When the door opened, Rusty, without knowing just how he had worked it, found himself outside, once more free to amuse himself.

The slam of the door aroused Mr. Abbott, but in the moment or two required for him to realize what had disturbed his nap Rusty had raced well down in the grove, intent on discovering what it could have been that he saw move.

“That dog has opened the back door again!” exclaimed Mr. Abbott, springing from his comfortable chair. He hurried to the back porch followed by a very sleepy Betty and her mother. Rusty was nowhere to be seen, and the door was latched!

“You were dreaming, Arthur,” Mrs. Abbott said, suppressing a yawn. “Rusty

is taking a nap somewhere. Go and look on his blanket, Betty. You will find him there."

But Betty did not find him!

Very much puzzled over the means Rusty had used to unlatch the door, Mr. Abbott was more interested at the moment in inspecting the latch than he was in learning the whereabouts of the dog.

Then Betty, remembering how he had wandered off the day before and gone fishing, ran to the gate to look up and down the road. Not seeing him she ran to the back of the house calling, "Hi, Rusty. Hi, Rusty! Where are you?"

Mr. Abbott gave his own special three-note whistle, sharp and insistent. From far down in the grove Rusty answered with a quick "Yip," which meant "I hear you, and I'll be there in just a minute."

Betty, hurrying through the grove in the direction from which Rusty's answer had come, met him trotting back toward

the house, his tail announcing that he was especially well satisfied with himself.

She called him to her, but he circled around, headed straight for the house. Betty could not understand such action on the part of her pet. She ran after him, calling to her father that Rusty was coming, and that she was sure he had something in his mouth.

Mr. Abbott, having abandoned his effort to learn Rusty's secret of opening the latched door, was seated on the steps, somewhat provoked at having been awakened from his nap, but much amused at the continued surprises their spaniel had for them.

"I'd give something to know what else that dog will do," he said to Mrs. Abbott. "It begins to look as if we had lost all control over him. If he continues to run away and ——"

"And finding eggs for you to step on," interrupted his wife, "you think we had

better dispose of him. I know you. You were just as worried yesterday as Betty."

Mr. Abbott evidently considered that remark undeserving of comment, for he made none. He was intently watching Rusty.

"He has something in his mouth," he observed.

Rusty stopped in front of his master, and carefully placed a large white egg on the ground at his feet.

"Well, what do you know about that!" Mr. Abbott exclaimed, as he joined in his wife's laughter.

"He—wants—you—to—step—on—it," gasped Mrs. Abbott sinking into a chair on the verge of hysterics. "He—remembers—how—you—enjoyed—the—other—experience!"

Mr. Abbott managed to muster another laugh, but it was evident that he couldn't be as enthusiastic over that other experience as his wife seemed to be. He

asked Betty where the dog had found the egg.

"I don't know. He was coming back with it when I saw him," she replied. "He wouldn't stop and give it to me, but kept right on to you." Betty was a bit hurt to think that she had been avoided by her pet in favor of her father.

"Of course he did," Mrs. Abbott said, struggling to control her laughter. "He knows your father likes fresh eggs delivered at his feet."

"I saw this one coming, anyway," Mr. Abbott responded with a chuckle. "Where did you find it, Rusty?" he asked. "Come and show me."

Seeing his master ready to go somewhere, Rusty raced in circles, barking with delight at the prospect of some member of his family showing a disposition to do something besides sleep. He seemed to have forgotten all about the egg. But Mr. Abbott had that on his mind, and

with Betty walked down through the grove, Rusty racing ahead, dodging back and forth hoping for the scent of something that promised fun.

“ I imagine this egg is a product of the same hen that had her nest under the woodpile, and we’ll find that she has stolen another nest wherever we find a place in which she could hide,” Mr. Abbott remarked to Betty as they walked along. “ We’ll look under the vines on the fence when we get down to where you first saw him, because that foolish dog evidently doesn’t intend to lead us to where he found it.”

Betty protested that Rusty had a good memory, or he wouldn’t have found the fisherman after only one visit. She was recalling other instances when he had proved that he did not forget, when Rusty hustled around from behind them and deposited another large white egg in front of his master!

“ You see I can pick up eggs anywhere around here,” his tail said very plainly.

Betty thought that was the best kind of a joke on her father, for he had been peer-



“ I CAN PICK UP EGGS ANYWHERE ”

ing under the vines along the fence as they walked. She clapped her hands and laughed, insisting that it showed Rusty's memory was all right, or that his eyesight was much better than theirs.

Mr. Abbott was unwilling to believe

that he had missed finding a nest under the vines along the fence. He stooped, picked up Rusty's latest find, and examined it closely.

"I'll bet he went back and picked up the same egg," he said. "Your mother would think it a great joke to give it to him to bring to me."

But Betty merely laughed. She knew that her father didn't believe that, but was just pretending.

"If you really know where this nest is, go bring us some more eggs," Mr. Abbott ordered Rusty.

But Rusty wanted to play. He had done enough egg-hunting for one hot afternoon. He dodged back and forth in front of them, and nothing could induce him to take even a sniff under the vines or lead the way to the hidden nest.

Just between us, Rusty knew there were no more eggs in the nest and, as the hen wasn't there, he could see no use in

going to it. Mr. Abbott and Betty turned back toward the house, examining every likely hiding-place. But they found nothing. Rusty could have told them that they wouldn't, for he knew it was in the hollow base of an old tree.

They showed Mrs. Abbott the result of their hunt, and Mr. Abbott accused her of having Rusty use the same egg to fool them, but when she pointed to the table on which she had placed the first one, Mr. Abbott had to admit that no one had aided Rusty in producing the second egg.

Betty suggested that they all walk over to the Webster home with the eggs and tell the story, but her father protested that he had had enough exercise for one hot afternoon and wanted to resume his interrupted nap. So Betty and her mother, Betty carrying the eggs, went through the gap in the fence to tell the story of Rusty's latest discovery. Rusty of course went with them.

It was an earnest group of searchers for eggs that passed an hour late that afternoon looking into what they believed was every possible hiding-place for a hen. But they looked in vain. With such a party as Mrs. Webster and his two mistresses, to say nothing of Flossie and Maggie, Rusty could not have been expected to look for eggs or nests. He spent all his time trying to induce Flossie to romp with him, which very much excited an indignant Maggie. She didn't approve in the least of this strange black dog making advances to her daughter.

Dusk was settling down when they gave up the search, but in the meantime Mrs. Abbott had promised to go on the bird-hunting expedition Mrs. Webster had suggested to Betty when they first met. By the time they finally got back to the cottage, even Rusty was willing to admit that he had had enough exercise for the day.

CHAPTER X

RUSTY MEETS PETER

VERY early the next morning, Rusty was able to see that the day was going to be one of his pleasant ones. No sooner was breakfast finished than his master whistled to him and started for the garage. Being called to ride with Mr. Abbott was so unusual that Rusty hesitated, looking doubtfully at Betty.

“Go along,” she said. “I’m coming in a minute. I’ve got to go to school while you and Daddy are having the best kind of a time.”

Rusty knew what the first two words meant. He raced after Mr. Abbott to superintend backing out the car. By that time Betty had joined them. His cup of happiness was full to overflowing, for he

could sit on Betty's lap, hang half out of the window, and be talked to during the entire ride.

The big building in front of which they stopped and into which Betty disappeared with other girls and boys did not look like the school at home which Rusty had attended many times with Betty and Jennie and Pauline. It was several days before he became satisfied that he was to miss Betty's company a large part of each day, as he had done in their other home.

He forgot his disappointment over losing Betty's company as soon as they reached home, because Mr. Abbott, after putting up the car, whistled to him to go with him on the promised walk around the lake. It had turned cool, and the walk of three miles was no hardship for either of them.

"Somewhere along here, Rusty, that Mr. Robbins who brought you home from your fishing expedition has a home," Mr.

Abbott said to the little dog as he started out, while Rusty darted here and there, but without getting far from him. "He has a daughter about Betty's age and a goat. In a day or two, after the girls become acquainted, you will have two more playmates, but how you will get along with a goat, or the goat with you, is more than I can guess."

"Yip, yip!" Rusty answered to tell his master that he could get along with anything that would play with him.

Not far beyond where this conversation took place, an automobile overtook and passed them, and then was stopped with a great screeching of the brakes by the driver. He proved to be Mr. Robbins.

"I recognized Rusty," he said as he backed his car to where Mr. Abbott was walking. "I'm just getting back from taking Sally to school."

Mr. Abbott replied that he had carried Betty to school, and was now showing

Rusty the sights and getting some exercise. Rusty was too busy driving several snake birds that were twisting their necks into all sorts of shapes as they stood perched on stakes out in the water to hear the two men agree that hereafter only one would make the trip to school, taking both girls.

But Rusty wasn't too busy to notice Mr. Abbott open the door of the car. He was the first to get in. He didn't know where he was going and it made no difference to him. He couldn't have been any keener had he heard the agreement to ride to the Robbins home and then all three continue the walk.

When the car stopped and the two gentlemen got out in the yard, Rusty leaped over into the front seat and sat very straight, looking out through the windshield exactly as he did at home when James, the Abbott chauffeur, got out of the car. He was pretending that the ride

was not over. But there was no goat at home to make him change his mind!

Around the corner of the house there came trotting stiff-legged a white goat that stopped as soon as he caught sight of a stranger. "Yip, yip!" cried Rusty, jumping to the open window of the car and hanging perilously out. He would make him run.

Usually when Rusty yipped at a cat or a rabbit, or a squirrel or a bird, it ran or flew. But this strange creature shook its head and chewed on a cud.

Sure that the creature did not turn and run because he was cooped up in the car and could not chase him, Rusty cried to be released. He did not like the long jump to the ground from the window, and never attempted it unless absolutely necessary when there was no one to open the door for him and permit him to descend properly.

"Let him out," said Mr. Robbins.

“ I’ll guarantee he will not do Peter any damage.”

So out popped Rusty to rush pell-mell at Peter. But he stopped short after a few jumps! Peter didn’t run! Instead, he stood there with a lowered head that looked to Rusty as if it had some sharp humps on it.

“ Woof! ” challenged Rusty.

But all the strange animal did was to paw the ground with one front hoof and shake his head threateningly.

Three times in rapid succession Rusty woofed, but when he did, he was very careful to be braced, ready to run or to dodge if matters got too warm for him.

But all that happened was that Peter trotted to the house, clattered up the steps, and turned around with lowered head.

“ He’ll play with anything or anybody that will play with him,” Mr. Robbins explained with a smile, “ but he has the idea

that he must prevent any other animal from going up on the piazza."

Rusty slowly went as far as the bottom of the steps, where he stopped to consider what was best for him to do. He decided that anything but going up those steps just then was what he would do, so, with a parting woof, he trotted around to the rear of the house to investigate. And right behind him cantered Peter!

By the time Mrs. Robbins, who had come to the door, had been introduced and her husband had explained that he was about to walk around the lake with Mr. Abbott, Rusty had run half a mile around the yard, stopping every little while to face the goat, which trotted after him.

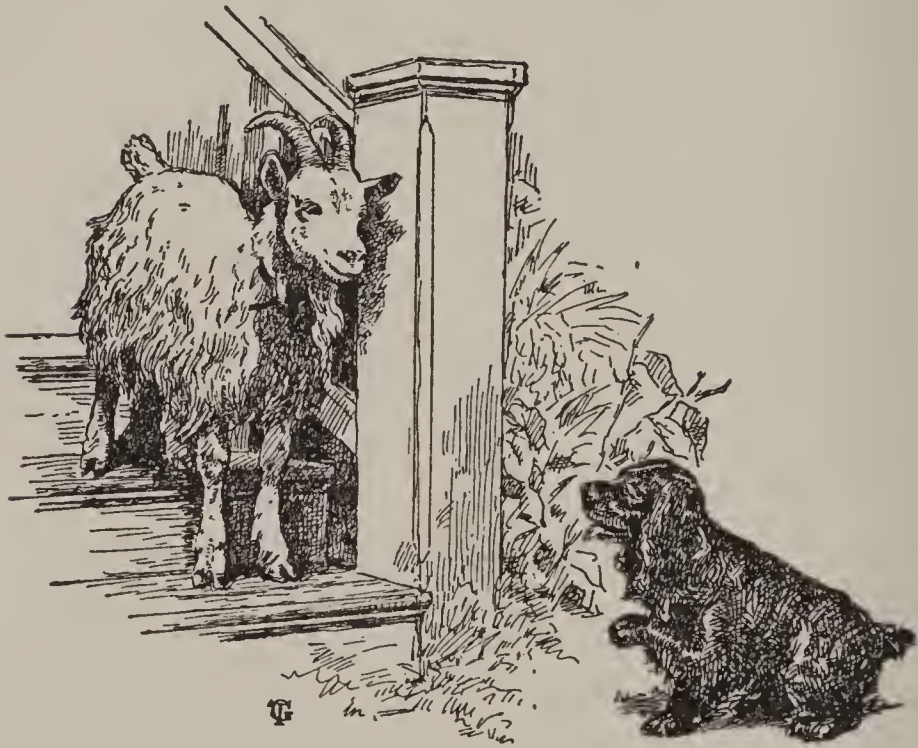
"Woof!" Rusty would say, meaning to stop following him. Peter would stop, lower his head, and wait for Rusty to start again. Rusty didn't know that Peter wanted a playmate and was doing his best to play.

Finally, panting, the little spaniel dropped down at the feet of his master while Peter sampled a piece of paper he found in the yard. That reminded Rusty that Peter had apparently been eating something when he first saw him and, when Mrs. Robbins turned to enter the house, he jumped up to follow her, curious as ever to know what the inside of this house looked like, and hopeful as usual of a bite of something to eat, although he had had his regular breakfast only an hour before.

But he lost all interest in what the interior of the house looked like or in the possibility of a lunch when a furious clattering of hoofs made him turn. Peter had bounded up the steps, and with lowered head was after Rusty in earnest.

Quick as a flash, Rusty dodged and ran to the end of the piazza, where he turned at bay and barked, but without stopping the determined white animal that pursued

him. He dodged out of the corner and down the steps to a safe retreat at his master's heels. He did not mind in the least the laughter that greeted his move.



“ HE ALLOWS NO DOGS NOR CATS ON
THAT PIAZZA ”

He was satisfied to have the goat remain at the top of the steps, contentedly chewing his cud.

“ I told you,” Mr. Robbins said to Rusty, “ that Peter thinks those steps are

for him to defend. He allows no dogs nor cats on that piazza."

"Woof," said Rusty, and willingly followed close at Mr. Abbott's heels as they left for the walk around the lake.

Except when an automobile approached, Mr. Abbott paid no attention to the little dog, leaving him free to investigate everything that interested him. That, in Rusty's opinion, was the way to enjoy a walk. By running down to the college boathouse, where several girl students were eating a lunch, Rusty heard some pleasant things said about him and managed to beg a bite of a doughnut, which tasted especially nice because it was forbidden him at home. He didn't mind the extra effort necessary to overtake the two men.

He was trotting for a moment close behind them when he caught sight of a big ball rolling slowly across the close-cut grass of the club where several were en-

joying lawn bowling. The lawn was close to the highway and unprotected by a fence, which made it easy for Rusty to give instant chase.

Laughter from some of the party followed him, as did indignant commands from others: "Get away from there!" and "Here! Leave that alone!" They went unheeded, as did a peremptory whistle from his master. So intent was he on the rolling ball that he did not see the other balls clustered close together.

He ran beside it, barking, whining, and pretending to bite it until the ball had almost stopped rolling. Satisfied that he was conquering it, he got in front of it, backing up with quick little jerks of his body until he backed against the other balls! Before he could escape the slowly moving ball had rolled against his front paws. What a yelp of fright he gave as he leaped to one side!

It was then Rusty remembered that he

had been ordered to keep away by strange people, and that his master had called him. Whining, he ran to Mr. Abbott, sat up, and held out one paw for examination. How he did want sympathy! And his master paid no attention to him! But one of the ladies gave him what he loved. She took the paw carefully in one hand, looked it over sympathetically, talking to him all the time, and showed that she knew dogs, for she skilfully dodged his attempted kiss.

Mr. Abbott apologized for his dog's action, and every one was good-natured about it. Several seemed to think it was a very good joke but whether on the man who had rolled the ball, or on Rusty, or on both was not exactly clear. By the time they had finished a brief chat and Mr. Robbins and Mr. Abbott had promised to try their hands at the game on some other day, Rusty had forgotten all about his pinched paws. But he ran after no more

balls, remaining in a safe place close to his master's heels.

He trotted very soberly the remaining distance to their home without showing any signs of suffering. But when he got into the house he remembered how unsympathetic his master had been. He went directly to his big mistress, sat up before her, a distressed, pained look in his eyes, and held out a paw for her to look over.

"I don't see anything very serious the matter, Rusty," she said as she examined it. "There is no cut, and I don't see a sliver. What could have happened to you while taking a walk?"

She looked at her husband for an explanation.

"You see," he said, looking severely at Rusty, "he did not stay with me, but rushed down on the lawn of the club house and spoiled their game. Had he behaved himself, he would not have had his foot pinched. If he had minded when I whis-

tled, he wouldn't have been frightened. I don't know what should be done to punish him."

The tone of voice told Rusty that he was being scolded. He tried hard to pay no attention, but every time he looked at his master, those eyes were staring hard at him and his mistress said sorrowfully, "Oh, Rusty! How could you do such a thing?"

It was very trying for a little dog to sit there and be scolded. With one more glance at each of them to see whether he was forgiven, but finding no sympathy, he yawned elaborately and carefully limped into the bedroom, turned around three times on his own special blanket, sighed a deep sigh, and forgot the scolding in sleep. But as he disappeared into the bedroom he thought it very unkind of his master to laugh so loudly. If *he* had been hurt, Rusty would not have laughed at him.

“That dog is a master at pretending,” was the last thing he heard his master say before he slipped into a dream of battling for his life with a great big animal, and of being chased by a big round thing that tried to run over him.

“One thing is certain,” Mr. Abbott said at the luncheon table that noon, as Rusty, still a little sleepy and forgetting to limp after his nap, came slowly into the dining-room, “if that dog were on his very last legs and some one half a mile away was cooking something, he would manage to drag himself there.”

Mrs. Abbott reminded him that some men were very much like dogs when it became almost time for another meal. She had known one, she said, who quite often was looking for something to eat long before it was meal time.

Betty's chair was in its usual place, but Betty was not there. That was a situation that had occurred only once or twice

since Rusty had joined the family circle. Betty was at home every noon from her school in the North. Quite naturally, Rusty was unable to understand why she was absent from the table.

He jumped up on their chair and sorrowfully looked from one to the other of his family. He licked his jaws, moved his forefeet, whined very softly, and even spoke very softly, all without attracting any attention to the fact that he was at the table and was not receiving anything to eat.

Perhaps Betty didn't know that the meal was ready! That bright thought sent him scurrying into the bedroom, and then to look out through the front screen door. There he gave two quick barks, but Betty did not answer.

Back to the dining-room he trotted but, instead of taking his usual place on Betty's chair, he sat down beside Mr. Abbott. He was in hope that he had been

forgiven. Very soon a sizable piece of meat dangled directly in front of his nose.

“Arthur Abbott!” his wife exclaimed. “I saw you! I remember how you issued orders when Rusty came to us that nobody was to feed him at the table except what morsels Betty gave him.”

Mr. Abbott grinned sheepishly. “This isn’t home, you know, so I thought it would be all right just this once.”

Rusty was surprised to see the severe look his mistress gave his master. Rusty’s idol was being scolded! It was just such a look he had received when they were finding fault with him. He didn’t know the reason for it, but his sympathy was needed. He stood up and kissed the hand that had dangled the meat in front of him before lying down close against his master’s feet, without even hinting that he would like another bite. He was sure that he would have received one had he risked further scolding of his master.

CHAPTER XI

RUSTY IS SATISFIED

BEFORE the end of another week, conditions were much more satisfactory to Rusty than they had been. This was due to the chance meeting of his master and Mr. Robbins on the morning they had taken the first of several walks around the lake. The two men had struck up a friendship, and Betty and Sally, to say nothing of Mrs. Abbott and Mrs. Robbins, had met and enjoyed each other's company. Betty and Sally, both strangers in Lakeland and living so near to each other, were together almost every minute when not in school. On the days that Mr. Robbins drove the girls to school, Rusty was a welcome passenger in his car, taking it as a matter of course

that he should ride in any car in which he found his little mistress.

With the girls to play with and Peter, the goat, to threaten until he pretended to fight; with Flossie to coax away from her mother, and the rabbit to chase almost every day, Rusty had no more time for blue days. Although he saw his fisherman friend almost every day as they drove to or from school, there was now so much to do at home or at the Robbins' home that he gave no thought to fishing. He was just as busy now as he ever had been at home in the North, for besides Betty and her playmate and Mrs. Abbott, he now had Mr. Abbott on his mind to amuse whenever he had a spare minute, and he just had to visit Mr. Travers every day, if for only a minute or two.

One day he followed his master to the rear of the big grove when he went down to talk with Mr. Travers, who was working there, and he received one of the big

surprises of his life. Up at camp he had seen and been scolded by several grey squirrels, and chipmunks had flirted their tails at him and disappeared in stone walls. One squirrel and one chipmunk at camp had been so friendly that they would take food left for them on the piazza—if Rusty were not around. But he had never seen a squirrel that lived inside a man's coat!

Their progress down through the grove had been very slow. It had been important to stop at the brush pile and try to coax his master to drive out a brown rabbit for a little fun. He had pretended to look for fresh eggs, but that had just been to fool his master, for Rusty did not once look where he knew they might be found. They were going somewhere and, although Rusty had no idea where, he didn't intend to be obliged to carry an egg there in his mouth.

Before they reached the end of the

grove, Rusty could hear the sound of an axe where Mr. Travers was cleaning out some old growth near the edge of some marsh-land. That was a new sound to him, so he kept very close to his master. When they came within sight of Mr. Travers, he had stopped to rest and was wiping his face.

He saw them coming, waved his hand in greeting, and quickly picked up his coat and slowly and carefully put it on. Mr. Abbott noticed what Rusty did not; that Mr. Travers was very careful how he handled the coat and was very much interested in one of the pockets as he slowly put his arms into the armholes.

Now that the noise he didn't know about had stopped, Rusty raced ahead with joyous little barks of greeting to this friend who frequently invited him into his rooms down at the garage, and who played with him a little and talked to him a great deal when both of them happened

to have a minute to spare from other duties.

“Hello, Rusty,” Mr. Travers greeted him. “Be careful now, and don’t frighten my little friend here in my pocket.”



POPPED HIS HEAD OUT

The little dog stopped, cocked his head to one side, and waited, while his tail asked just what it was that he was being warned to be careful about.

Just as if a certain grey squirrel had understood everything that was going on, one suddenly popped his head out from one of the many pockets of Mr. Travers's coat and told Rusty in so many words that he had thought a squirrel might have a friend away down there at the rear of the grove without being bothered by a dog.

Having delivered his opinion very quickly, he disappeared within the coat again with a whisk of his body that was so quick Rusty could not tell whether he had turned around and gone in head first, or whether he had just slid down backwards.

And before Rusty could get over his surprise and say something in reply, his master had picked him up in his arms, much to the disgust of the dog. He whined a little and showed in every way he could that he had no intention of harming the squirrel, but merely wanted him to come out from the protection of a man's coat so he could be chased up a tree.

Then Rusty would dare him to come down, and the squirrel would twit him about not being able to climb a tree, even such a low one as an orange or a grapefruit tree.

“ I made friends with him some months ago,” Mr. Travers explained. “ Now I never come down here without some nuts in my coat pocket, and I’m never here more than a few minutes before I hear him chattering at me. I tell him the nuts are in my pocket, and in a few more minutes he musters up courage to come and crawl into the pocket and eat them. Sometimes he goes off with one to store away, but he is back again in a few minutes.

“ Just now was the first time I ever picked up my coat with him in the pocket, and I didn’t want to frighten him. Of course when I bring my lunch down here, as I do sometimes, he climbs all over me and goes into the pocket while I am wear-

ing my coat, so he knew what it felt like to have me with the coat on, but not while putting it on."

While Mr. Travers was telling the story of his little friend, he was watching him closely, for the squirrel was frightened by the presence of Rusty, because no dog could keep quiet under such circumstances.

As it was nearly noon and as Mr. Travers had not carried his lunch, he said that he would walk back with Mr. Abbott and Rusty. He went to the nearest tree, opened his coat, and in an instant the squirrel had flashed from his pocket and with a twitch of his tail and some rather saucy language had climbed to the very top. From that safe place, he stuck his head around the trunk and dared Rusty to do anything.

Once more on the ground where he could run, Rusty rushed to the tree and, just as was his custom in the North while

at camp, dared the squirrel to come down where they could have the fun of a chase.

They were still arguing, when the peremptory whistle of his master sounded, and with a parting bark Rusty raced after the two men. He decided that when there was nothing better to do he could run down to the end of the grove and worry that squirrel and, perhaps, Mr. Travers would have a bite of something for him to eat. Rusty never planned anything without the hope that there would be something for him to eat.

It was that evening at dinner that Betty became very much excited, clapping her hands and exclaiming, "Goody! Goody!" then giving Rusty one of those sudden hugs and kisses that always told him that his little mistress was delighted with something he did not know about, but which he was sure meant fun for him.

The word "circus" was used freely, and lots of other words that Rusty never

had heard before, but whatever was being discussed, he was ready to enjoy, and said so very promptly.

“Nothing doing,” said Mr. Abbott emphatically. “This is one place, Rusty, where you are not going.”

“Oh, Daddy,” protested Betty. “It will be so instructive for him. He will see lots of animals he never saw before.”

“His education must be neglected then,” replied her father. “With you and Sally to keep an eye on, to say nothing of seeing that your mother doesn’t try to pet the leopards and tigers, I shall have enough trouble without hanging on to that dog.”

Betty’s arms stole around Rusty, and he knew from her manner of hugging him and from the suspicion of tears in her eyes that for some reason he was to be left out of whatever fun was being planned. He couldn’t resist kissing her. He could see that she felt very badly about some-

thing, and he was sure he was that something.

“It sounds as if you had ‘put your foot down’ once more,” Betty’s mother observed. “I would take it up again if I were you. I promise not to worry you by petting leopards, tigers, or lions and I will make myself responsible for Rusty. Your enjoyment of the circus will not be handicapped in the least if he goes along with the girls.”

“They’ll want to take the goat next,” Mr. Abbott grumbled. “This family has as big a menagerie as any circus, if we had them all in one place.”

“We don’t want to take Peter,” Betty explained. “But Sally will feel as badly as I do if Rusty can’t go.”

“That settles it, of course,” Mr. Abbott said with a sigh of resignation. “If Sally Robbins is going to be disappointed, there is nothing an Abbott can do but yield. Nobody ever thinks how disap-

pointed I can get to be when, instead of being given a chance to see a circus, I've got to sit outside and keep an eye and both hands on that black bunch of wiggling curiosity. They will never let us in to see the circus with a dog."

"I hadn't thought of that," Mrs. Abbott admitted. "If that is so, it might be better to leave Rusty here with Eliza. No. I can't do that, for I promised her to have to-morrow off duty because a cousin of hers is to be married. And Mr. Travers is to be away over the week-end. Rusty must go, and I'll agree to take care of him. I don't care about the circus, anyway. I'll drive around and see Winter Haven. They say it is a very interesting place."

"But I want Mother to see the circus," Betty said. "If they will let Rusty into the circus, and I don't see why they shouldn't, I'll take care of him."

"With every one but me volunteering

to be a nurse for that nuisance of a dog, I'm not going to be left out in the cold, so I'll take care of him myself." Mr. Abbott was very emphatic.

"That will be very nice," his wife said with a knowing smile.

"I thought you would enjoy the suggestion," Mr. Abbott retorted. "But I tell you now, Mr. Dog," he said addressing Rusty and shaking a finger at him, "you'll come pretty near doing what you are told to do to-morrow."

Rusty's eyes shifted from Mr. Abbott's threatening gesture to take a quick look at Betty. He received his usual reward of a hug and a kiss, with assurance that everything was all arranged and that he was to go where he would see elephants and lions and tigers and all kinds of strange animals.

It was after they had gone to bed that Betty confided to Rusty that they were to drive to Winter Haven to see the big cit-

rus show and to attend the circus that was there every year at that time.

But what Betty didn't know, which kept it a secret also from Rusty, for whatever Betty knew, Rusty was told, was that the Robbinses were taking their car also, and that they all were to stop at the Brackley home with some playthings for the children that both families were contributing, for Mrs. Abbott had told the story of their stop when they had the flat tire. She had also been shopping, and had purchased some pretty playthings.

Late that evening Mr. Abbott had an idea.

"There would be room," he said as if to himself, "to take along several of the Brackley youngsters."

"Arthur Abbott, what a glorious thought!" his wife exclaimed.

But Betty and Rusty and Sally could not know about that, because they were all asleep.

CHAPTER XII

RUSTY GOES TO THE CIRCUS

WHEN Betty awakened bright and early the next morning, Rusty was still sound asleep. He had learned to ignore the morning song of the mocking bird. For a dog that was busy all day, it was too early to get up when the birds started their day. Birds went to bed with the sun, but Rusty had several hours of the evening in which he worked—if there was anything he could find to do.

For a few minutes Betty remained quiet, trying to remember what it was that was to mark the day. Then she remembered. Circus!

“Come on, Rusty,” she called. “Time to get up and get ready, for we’re ——”

“Wait a minute. Wait—a—minute,”

came from the other room in her father's deep voice. "That dog will have excitement enough to-day without your starting him off at daylight."

"Aren't we going to start early?" Betty asked. "I thought because it was so far that we would go very early, because there will be so much to see before we go to the circus. Aren't we going early, Daddy?"

"We are going to have breakfast first, anyway," her father answered. "It's not breakfast time yet for an hour, and it is a pity to get that dog so worked up that we shall not be able to move without having him underfoot. It's a wonder that I haven't broken half a dozen legs a dozen times by falling over him whenever we plan to go anywhere!"

This calling back and forth after Betty's excited order to him to "come on" started Rusty about the business of the day, knowing as he did that it was

something unusual. He leaped from Betty's bed, galloped into the other bedroom, and leaped on to the bed of his master, where he tried to kiss him.

When his master ducked under the bedclothes, it was a signal that he was willing to play; to be dug out by an eager little dog in spite of his protests that he didn't wish to get up an hour before breakfast, especially on a day when he must miss going to the circus, just to take care of a black dog that was a nuisance.

But Mr. Abbott did get up almost an hour before Eliza could be expected to have breakfast ready to serve. He pretended to be very cross about losing that extra hour in bed, and grumbled every time Rusty was anywhere near him. But his grumbling wasn't in the tone of voice that disturbed Rusty. He knew his master was pretending to be out of patience with him, but that he really had had a good time being dug out of bed.

After a good deal of running back and forth between the two bedrooms, Rusty managed to get all three members of his family out of bed. Once he had seen them up, he was satisfied, and rushed to the kitchen to hurry Eliza. What was going to happen to him, Rusty didn't know but, like any intelligent dog, he had caught from Betty's manner and the excitement in her voice that something out of the ordinary was to take place. He was in a hurry to learn what it was.

"Whafo' you rushin' 'round lak dat?" Eliza demanded after he had leaped up on her with little excited barks.

"I'd mos' think you was gwine hab a weddin' in yo' fambly, like I is," she said. "Go long now an' lemme get de breakfast. Go get de milk down to de gate. Hurry up, now."

A minute later Rusty was running to the gate, Betty skipping along behind him for she was just as excited as the dog,

although she tried to conceal her excitement a little, and Rusty didn't.

Breakfast was rather sketchy for both Betty and Rusty in spite of threats by Betty's father that they would not budge a step until they had eaten a hearty meal. Excitement, however, was too much for appetites, and the start was made with the certainty that both Betty and Rusty would be very hungry before luncheon.

"Now we will go and get Sally," said Betty happily, as the car turned out of the yard. Rusty was on her lap. He turned his head for a hasty kiss to tell her that he understood and that it was all right with him, if they didn't lose too much time. "She will be ready and waiting for us," Betty continued, "and we are going to have just the greatest time in the world!"

Sally ran to the car to greet Betty and Rusty, speaking to Mr. and Mrs. Abbott as well, although that was just because

she had been brought up to be polite to her elders. Really, she hardly saw them.

“Isn’t it great that Daddy and Mother are going, too?” Sally cried. “We are going to take both cars, because Daddy says it would be no fun to crowd into one. There would be four grown-ups and you and me and Rusty. Besides there are packages, and neither Daddy nor Mother will tell what’s in them! I don’t think that’s fair.”

That reminded Betty that some mysterious packages were in the back of their car that had been placed there when she was not looking.

“We have some packages, too,” she said. “What are they, Daddy?”

“Lunch for you and Rusty,” her father answered, winking very slowly at Sally.

“He’s fooling. He winked at me,” Sally giggled. “Let’s peek!”

But they didn’t have time to peek, for Mrs. Abbott was getting out of their car

to ride with Mrs. Robbins while Mr. Abbott drove Betty and Sally and Rusty.

After much calling back and forth to make sure that both drivers understood exactly where they were to go, they got started. Sally had been to Winter Haven once before, so that when Mr. Abbott turned off from the direct road at a corner she exclaimed that he was going the wrong way.

"This is a nice road, too," Mr. Abbott explained. "Your father and I thought we would go this way, and perhaps we shall come back over the road you know."

That satisfied Sally. Betty paid no attention. She was thinking about the circus and not the road. Rusty, hanging half out of the window with Betty holding to the leash, gave his full attention to anything alive that he could see.

They had been driving rapidly for a long time when Betty recognized an old tumble-down chapel which had attracted

her attention the day they had stopped at the Brackley house.

“Daddy,” she called, “we are going on the same road we did that day we stopped and had the fun with the little pig, and ate that supper where all the children were!”

“I do believe we are,” her father answered. “I hope we don’t get another puncture or the engine may decide not to start again, as it did that time. We should be late for the circus then.”

“We could all crowd into our car,” said Sally. “Both of them would not break down at the same time.”

Mr. Abbott chuckled at Sally’s practical remark, and agreed that if misfortune should overtake them, Sally had hit on the way to overcome it. In another minute he had blown his horn and slowed to a stop in front of the cabin in which the Brackley family lived. Mr. Robbins pulled up directly behind him.

“Go and see if the rest of the party is ready, Betty,” her father said. “Rusty, stop that barking. The pig is not coming out of the house this morning!” Rusty had recognized the house, and was using every effort to get out of the automobile, even at the risk of the long jump from the window to the ground.

“What do you mean, Daddy?” Betty asked in astonishment.

“Never mind. Here come some of the children,” he answered. “Hello, children. Go tell your mother you are going to the circus with us!”

Four children stood and stared. Such an invitation they had never received before. They were not certain that they had heard correctly.

Just then their fox terrier came bounding from the house with yelps of excitement. Rusty, with one extra strong tug, yanked the leash from Betty’s hand and went head over heels out of the window.

Harry, the boy who had ridden for the mechanic on the occasion of their first visit, quick as a flash caught the end of the strap. Rusty came to a sudden stop.

“Cain’t he run?” Harry asked.

“Yes. Unfasten it,” responded Mr. Abbott. “We are going to stop a minute, anyway.”

Freed from the leash, Rusty and the terrier disappeared in a dash around the corner of the cabin, both barking at the top of their voices in their play.

Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Abbott had alighted from the other automobile, and while all this had been going on had walked to the cabin to the door of which Mrs. Brackley had been attracted from her kitchen by the sounds of excitement. Once the children had understood that they were really going to the circus, there had been plenty of noise.

Betty and Sally were so surprised at the unexpected stop and the invitation to

the Brackley family that they had not said much. They really didn't understand what it was all about until Mr. Abbott and Mr. Robbins began to hand out the mysterious packages from the cars.

Then Betty knew! They were playthings for the children! She had been so shocked by the few makeshift toys they had shown her as their choicest possessions that she had cried a little when talking about them to her mother before she fell asleep on the way home. She reached over and gave her father a big hug.

"Oh, quit choking me," he laughed. "How do you suppose I'm going to drive this car to the circus if you shut off my wind? Oh, all right. All right. I'm glad you are pleased. That makes all of us."

The children were beside themselves with joy. What an orgy of unwrapping paper there was! What cries of delight at a big doll, at a small doll, a toy airplane, a puzzle, some books with pictures!

In the doorway, tears in her eyes, was Mrs. Brackley watching her children and trying to find words to express her thanks for them.

It was just then that around the corner of the cabin came the procession of the fat little snow-white pig, the terrier, and Rusty, all in full cry. The pig dodged quickly, and somehow managed to get into the front door.

Rusty, the instant he saw the papers and playthings and heard the excited voices of the children, lost all interest in the little pig. He dashed for the group. In another instant he had snatched up a big rag doll and tried to leap into the open door of the Abbott car. But the load was too heavy.

Belle Brackley, who had laid it down for a moment to admire some other gift, gave a cry of dismay and ran for Rusty. He had dropped the doll to investigate one of his own legs that he had bumped

against the running-board when he attempted to get into the car.

The child snatched up her doll and ran back to the others to be sure that something else had not been taken from her in her brief absence.

Rusty followed, and when Bill, the terrier, came racing down, snatching at paper wrappings and anything else lying on the ground, Rusty chased after him. But he stopped when he heard Mrs. Brackley calling the children. Perhaps they were going to have something to eat!

He trotted up to her, but as she paid no attention to him and he could see that there were tears in her eyes, he sat up and offered her his sympathy.

But she was busy watching the children and marshalling them into the house. Rusty went in, too. No one paid the slightest attention to him, so he went in search of food. It had been more than two hours since he had eaten a hurried

breakfast. Hungry was no name for his condition.

Never in his life had he been in the center of so much confusion! Every one was talking at the top of his or her voice and rushing here and there. Three times he was stepped on and yelped, but no one had time to give him a pat and say he was sorry.

Even his big mistress and Mrs. Robbins, seated quietly at one side of the room, did not seem to care what happened to him. When Mrs. Brackley called two of her children into the kitchen, Rusty had renewed hopes of food and hurried after them. But he didn't stay! There was too much water and too much scrubbing going on! He feared that some one might decide that he needed a bath, and he was far too busy to spare time for one.

Suddenly he remembered Betty. He ran from the cabin, where he found her seated on the steps with Sally, each with

one of the very youngest Brackley children on her lap showing them pictures. The girls told him to run and play with the pig.

Just then Bill came from somewhere, dragging after him by one leg a rag doll. Everybody seemed to see him at the same time, including Rusty. Mr. Abbott and Mr. Robbins both shouted at him, and Betty and Sally called to him to drop it. But he didn't. Fox terriers do not drop anything when there is a chance to shake or tear it to pieces.

So Rusty went to the rescue. He caught up with Bill and tried to take away the doll by grabbing a dangling arm. It was a tug of war, with both dogs growling, tugging and trying to shake the poor doll, which gave Mr. Robbins a chance to get hold of the doll with one hand and Bill with the other. Mr. Abbott, laughing so hard he could not hurry, finally got a grip on Rusty, and between

them they managed to save the doll from destruction.

"I guess that's enough for this morning," he said as he picked up Rusty.



RUSTY WENT TO THE RESCUE

"We shall be ready to go in a few minutes and everybody but me seems to be too busy to keep an eye and a pair of hands on you. We'll go and sit in the car."

Protesting, squirming, whining, and barking, Rusty went to jail in the automobile. But it wasn't very bad, for his

master remained with him, talking to Mr. Robbins, who stood at the open window.

In a few minutes the crowd in the little cabin came trooping to the cars, Mrs. Brackley, a child on each arm, with them, and trying to tell every one what a wonderful treat the circus would be for her children.

Harry and Belle and Mary Ann, the three oldest, were to go. They had been scrubbed until their faces shone, and all three walked as if their feet hurt because they had on shoes and stockings for the first time in many days. They were so happy and excited that they didn't mind the discomfort.

Mary Ann, who found it hard to leave behind her new doll even for a few hours, got in with Sally and Betty, while Harry rode in front with Mr. Abbott. Belle rode with Mr. Robbins. They were off for a glorious day of excitement and some surprises, as any one could tell from the

insistent barking of Rusty while they were getting ready to start. He wanted the procession to get under way, for he knew bigger things were to be done somewhere. Betty had promised, and Betty's promises, he knew, were always kept.

CHAPTER XIII

RUSTY AND THE ELEPHANT

RUSTY divided his time on the ride to Winter Haven, where no one but Sally in Mr. Abbott's automobile had ever been, between sitting on Harry's knees staring out through the windshield and on the laps of the three girls on the rear seat. Harry knew about dogs, Rusty discovered, and he liked boys who knew dogs.

Harry, who was thirteen and large for his age, had ridden in an automobile before, but never in one so roomy and fine as the one in which he was seated. Mr. Abbott, when he saw that Harry was interested in the various indicators, explained them to him, slowing down the car a little to lean over and point out each one and explain its function.

Rusty objected to that. It might make them late. The moment the machine slowed on a straight road he spoke about it. And Harry knew what he meant.

“Don’ you be too hasty, Rusty,” he cautioned. “This yere car’ll git us there in time. I’m jes’ learnin’ suthin’ ’cause I’m a-goin’ to have one some day.”

Mr. Abbott gave the boy a quick glance of approval, but said nothing. He was glad he had brought the children with them. Betty and Sally were just as pleased to have Mary Ann riding with them. She knew about the flowers and herbs that grew in the edge of the swamp, and where the birds built their nests. But Mary Ann had never ridden in an automobile before, and had never been far from home. She found it hard to talk when there was so much to see and they moved so swiftly.

At last they reached the outskirts of Winter Haven and even Rusty didn’t

urge Mr. Abbott to drive faster, although he did lean out of the window with Harry's strong hand on his collar and make rather provoking remarks at each automobile that Mr. Abbott was able to pass. It sounded very much as if Rusty jeered at them as they dropped behind.

Ahead of them they could see the main street, lined with booths gay with flags and bunting floating in the gentle breeze. And far ahead of them at the other end of the street, were the tops of the circus tents. Betty pointed them out to Mary Ann and to Sally. Rusty, thinking she was telling him something, barked his approval.

Mr. Abbott turned off from the main street, followed by Mr. Robbins, and they parked at one side of a wide street on which there was little travel. In another minute every one, including Rusty held firmly on his leash by Harry but strug-

gling to go in half a dozen directions at once, was on the sidewalk.

The cars were carefully locked. It was not yet lunch time, although Rusty, as usual, was very hungry. The party started for the main street, and in a few minutes were all a part of the gay throng that was admiring the brilliant, colorful display of grapefruit, oranges of many varieties and shades of color, the dull red of the tangerines, and the little kumquats, those little plum-sized oranges.

The booths didn't interest Rusty at all. To tell the truth, Betty, Sally, Mary Ann and Harry, after looking at the displays in one or two of the booths, had seen enough. All of them saw so much fruit and ate so much that just because it was prettily arranged held no appeal for them. Their eyes wandered toward the circus tents, but it was too early to go there.

Betty had forgotten that she had been willing to take all the care of Rusty if he

were permitted to be with them. She only occasionally looked to make sure that he was safe on the end of his leash. They wandered down one side of the long street, pausing here and there at a booth, but Mr. Abbott knew that the younger members of the party wanted to see something more exciting.

It was quickly arranged that the two ladies should inspect the booths to their hearts' content while the two gentlemen with the children sought more interesting things to see, and that they all would meet at the cars and have lunch. Led by Rusty, tugging at his leash, the children headed for the lower end of the street where the circus beckoned both young and old.

Mary Ann and Belle had been accepted by Betty and Sally as comrades, and the four girls, arm in arm, Mary Ann with Betty, hurried along behind Harry, who was holding tight to Rusty. Mr. Abbott

had offered to relieve him of the care of the dog but Harry had declined.

“ I like to have a dog with me,” he said simply.

They had almost reached the circus ground when they heard the music of a circus band. In another minute the parade came into sight, with the musicians in gay uniforms perched on top of a high wagon that was drawn by six large grey horses.

The two men placed the children at the edge of the passageway left in the street between the booths. Even though Betty and Sally had seen a circus parade before, they were nearly as excited as the other children, to whom the occasion was the biggest event in their lives. Harry tried to hide his excitement by talking to Rusty, but his eyes he kept turned to the approaching circus wagon.

Rusty, who never howled when his big mistress played the piano, not even when

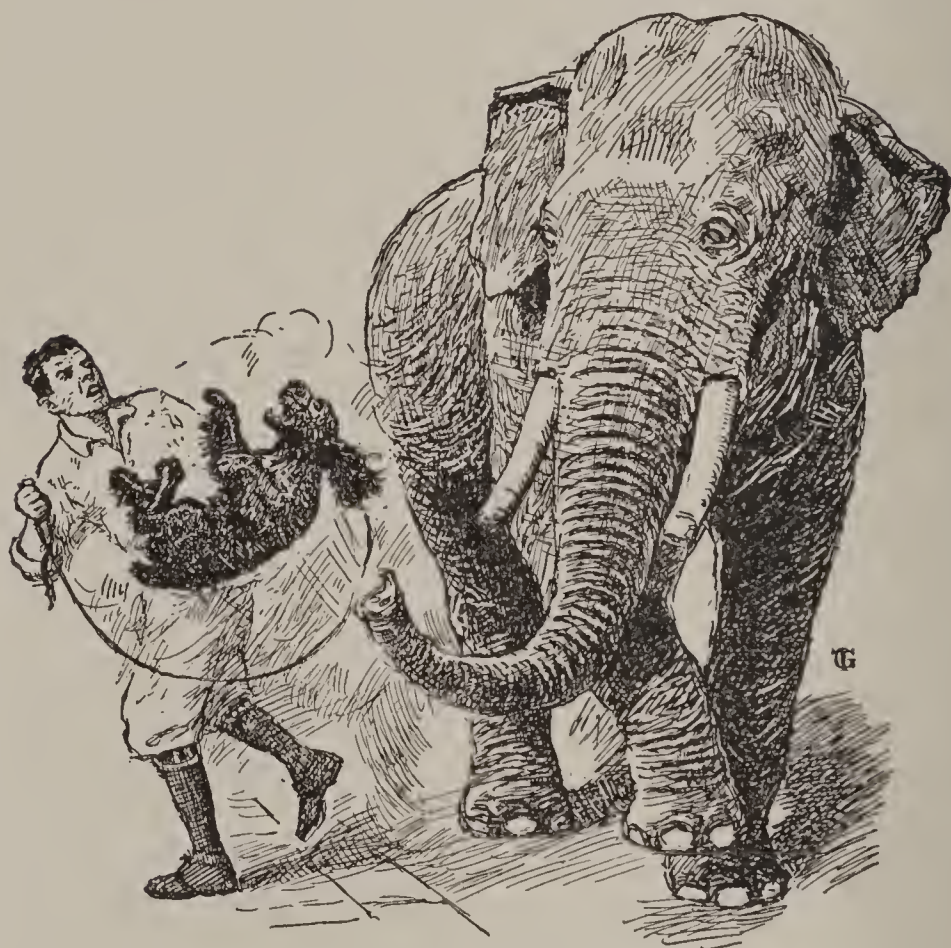
Betty practised, or at music over the radio, barked furiously at the noisy band, and then sat down and howled.

So busy was Rusty at his job of howling in disapproval of the quality of music provided by the band that he failed to see or to smell the big elephant that was noiselessly walking behind the band wagon, the animal's long trunk swinging from side to side, with that delicate finger in the end ready to pick up anything the elephant wanted. The trainer walked just ahead.

When the band came to the end of the piece, the music stopped. Rusty ended his howling. It was then he caught sight of the huge animal! He braced himself and bravely barked to show that he was there to protect those he loved. The trunk swung toward him and from the end, almost in Rusty's face, came a tremendous snort and blast of air!

Everybody jumped. But their little

jumps were nothing compared to what Rusty managed without trying. He went into the air and turned a complete back



HE TURNED A COMPLETE BACK SOMERSAULT

somersault, but whether, Mr. Robbins said afterwards, he was blown there or his fright helped some, no one could tell.

Rusty landed on his feet, made one

wild lunge that snapped the buckle of his leash and he was off as fast as he could run. He dodged behind the nearest booth and there, still frightened out of his wits, he was accidentally kicked by a running child who was trying to get where he could see the parade. Rusty yelped with pain but didn't stop. All he was trying to do was to get out of the crowd, away from that horrid noise and far away from that huge animal that had blown him right into the air.

Accustomed as Harry Brackley was to making his way quickly through brush, he failed to catch Rusty, because the little dog managed to dodge between legs with surprising speed. Above the noise of the band, which was playing another tune, and the rattle and bang of a drum corps not far behind, it is doubtful if the little dog could have heard the frantic calls of Betty or the sharp whistle of his master. He was deaf to everything but the noise

that had frightened him, and he connected the band with the elephant and his being blown into the air. All he wanted was to find some place of safety.

When at last he heard the band no more, he stopped running. No friendly person was in sight. Everything was strange. Now he was lost! Eagerly he sought for a scent of Betty or Mr. Abbott, but they had not been in that vicinity.

He saw water in a bird bath on a lawn, and there he had a long drink which he needed very much. He looked hopefully at the house, but no one was there to speak to him. Sadly he resumed his wanderings, keeping away from the sight and sounds of the crowded street where the elephant had frightened him.

He turned corner after corner, always hopeful that he would see something or some one that he knew. He was panting in the hot sun, and trotted very slowly, tired, thirsty again, forlorn, and oh, so

hungry! He stopped at the next corner, undecided which way to go. Suddenly he raced up the street with little joyful barks, for there beside an automobile stood his big mistress and Mrs. Robbins.

Rusty didn't know how he had found them. He was too well satisfied after his experiences to find any friend to care how he had done it. He leaped up on Mrs. Abbott, talked to her, and was exclaimed over by both ladies. They could not imagine what could have happened, for he had no leash and no one of their party was in sight.

Knowing that the others eventually would return to the cars as had been agreed, they wisely decided to remain there and to keep Rusty with them. To be certain that he did not get away from them, Mrs. Abbott unlocked the car and they all got in. Rusty, thirsty, hungry, and very tired, still trembling a little from his fright, tried hard to make his mistress

understand that nothing that had happened was his fault.

Anxiously the two ladies watched for the appearance of the others, knowing they were looking everywhere for the missing dog while he was safe with them. Yet there was nothing they could do but wait. They had no idea where they could find the others of their party. Rusty, having done his best to explain, curled down with a sigh to capture forty winks as the best way to wait for something to eat.

Suddenly he sat up, growling fiercely!

"What's the matter, Rusty?" Mrs. Abbott asked, trying to calm him by playing with one of his long silky ears.

Rusty's answer was a succession of barks as he sprang to the window in an effort to see what had disturbed him. Seeing nothing he leaped to the other side, barking fiercely all the time.

The rear of the car began to rise into

the air! Cries of fright from the ladies mingled with Rusty's furious barking! As Mrs. Abbott opened the door, Rusty shot out.

"Rusty. Rusty! Come here," his mistress cried. "He'll get away again and ——"

She stopped in amazement. Rusty was snapping at the hind feet of a huge elephant that just then dropped the rear end of the car he had been lifting from the street with his trunk. His trainer was clinging with his elephant hook to one ear of the huge beast, and running toward them on the sidewalk was Mr. Abbott, followed by all the others, all shouting at Rusty.

Harry Brackley ran into the street, picked up the little dog, and handed him to Betty. It was a very exciting time.

With the elephant once more on his way to move a circus wagon that had become stuck in soft sand down by the railroad

station, everybody began explaining at once, which took a long time. Betty, a little teary with relief at having found her pet safe and sound, hugged him close in her arms and told him again and again what a brave dog he was to have attacked an elephant that was going to hurt her mother. Harry exhibited the broken snap of the leash to prove that it had not been his fault that Rusty had got away from him, and Mrs. Abbott told how Rusty had found her.

Nothing could make Betty believe but that her pet had understood their plans to meet at the car and that he had gone directly there after the elephant had frightened him. The other children were equally certain that the happy ending was due to Rusty's smartness. Which was satisfactory to Rusty.

Considering all the excitement, it was a wonder that any of them had an appetite for lunch. But they did, all of them.

Yet, hungry as they were, had it not been for the attention Mrs. Abbott and Mrs. Robbins devoted to their young guests, they would have eaten little because of their interest in the strange scenes of a busy restaurant.

But the meal was finished at last, even Rusty being satisfied with what he had managed to gather from the offerings of the five children and a few really sizable bits Mr. Robbins had fed him, Mr. Abbott being on his good behavior for fear of a public scolding by his wife.

“Now,” said Mr. Abbott as they left the restaurant, “you folks go along to the circus. Rusty and I have had enough excitement for one day.” So Rusty spent the afternoon of that circus day in the rear of a big booth, dreaming of a big animal that blew him up into the air, while his master talked with an acquaintance he had made earlier in the day.

It was a tired and sleepy crowd that

started for home late that afternoon, and a still more tired one that stopped at the Brackley home, where Belle had to be awakened, for she had fallen sound asleep.

As Mr. Abbott was preparing to retire that night, he called the attention of Betty's mother to the fact that he had remarked that Rusty would be a nuisance.

"There is just one more thing I want to try that dog on," he said. "That's a trip in one of the glass-bottom boats at Silver Springs. I want to know what crazy thing he will do when he sees the fish."

"I guess that will be as safe as attending a circus at Winter Haven," Mrs. Abbott replied with a very, very tired yawn.

CHAPTER XIV

RUSTY SEES THE TURTLES

RUSTY's life after that eventful day at the circus settled down to a regular schedule. He had his runs almost daily after the rabbits that lived in the brush pile and which, Mr. Travers insisted, took turns in giving Rusty his daily exercise. His friendship with Flossie had become so strong that she frequently came to lunch with him while her mother remained in the back yard, scolding and refusing to venture up the steps. Every school day Rusty rode to school and back, helping to do the marketing by sitting in the car while his master or mistress or Mr. Robbins went into one of the big markets and brought out many bundles.

It was while on one of those trips that Mr. Abbott forgot to close one of the win-

dows and a cat tempted Rusty. He barked at her from the car, but she was a wise old cat and, seeing Rusty as she supposed safely imprisoned in the automobile, she went along about her business.

That was too much for Rusty. When he barked, he expected a cat to step lively. He made that long jump to the ground, stumbled forward so far that he bumped his nose, but was up instantly and in full pursuit. The cat, being very, very wise about the ways of dogs, waited until Rusty was close behind her, then whirled suddenly, arched her back, and unsheathed her claws.

Rusty shied in a wide circle and kept right on running! That cat was much mistaken if she thought he was chasing her! No, indeed. Not when he had rabbits that had no claws, and a goat, and even an elephant to chase. He came to a corner where traffic was heavy, and stopped to decide what to do.

He had never been alone in the city before. If it hadn't been for the open window and that cat he would be waiting in the automobile. A lady paused to pet him. A man said, "Hello." But Rusty paid no attention to them. The big man in the blue uniform out there in the street looked like a friend of his. He dodged ahead of an automobile to reach the place and stop where this friend was waving his arms and blowing a whistle. The officer looked down in surprise at him, after a passing motorist had attracted his attention by pointing to Rusty.

"Well, friend, where did you come from?" the big policeman asked. "Stay right where you are until these machines get by us and I'll see what I can do for you. You're that dog that belongs to that family from up North. You remember me, don't you?"

"Woof," said Rusty.

“Sure you do. Where's your car? How'd you get out, anyway?”

Rusty of course couldn't tell him, but the big friend had not worn that blue uniform a long time without learning to remember cars and people. He stooped and picked up Rusty.

“I'll bet your folks are in the market,” he said. “We'll look along for a Massachusetts car that looks like yours and see if you don't recognize it.”

“Abbott,” he said to himself, reading the name on Rusty's collar. “And there's a little girl in that family who'll miss you if we don't find your master or mistress.”

Rusty tried to kiss him. But he had been a friend of dogs too long. They stopped beside the car just as Mr. Abbott, his arms filled with bundles, came out of the market.

Rusty greeted him with a yip.

His master was so surprised that he almost dropped his bundles. He looked

from Rusty to the officer, because he could not understand how Rusty was out of the car.

“I arrested him for blocking traffic down at my corner,” the officer explained with a grin. “I thought I recognized him, and I remembered your car. Guess he got out of that window,” pointing to the one Mr. Abbott had neglected to close.

“Yip,” said Rusty.

“Mr. Officer,” said Mr. Abbott, “don’t ever own a spaniel. They are too much for any one person to handle. Last week this one tackled an elephant at Winter Haven.”

The officer laughed as he pulled gently one of those floppy ears of the little dog. “I’ll take him off your hands if you’re tired of him,” he said.

Mr. Abbott, having placed the bundles in the car, turned and looked hard at Rusty, pretending to be considering whether to give him away or not. At last

he shook his head and took Rusty. "I might, but I'm a little afraid my daughter might not like it," he said.

"And perhaps that lady of yours would have something to say," suggested the officer.

"Perhaps," agreed Rusty's master.

"And then perhaps you'd decide that *you* would keep him," the officer laughed.

"He's just a black nuisance; bothers the life out of me," declared Mr. Abbott as he got into the car and waved a salute. Rusty said good-bye and thanks with two yips.

All the way home Mr. Abbott grumbled and scolded, demanding to know what made the little dog leave the car, and telling him that if he ever let his mistress know that his master had left a window open he would give him away to the very first person he saw.

"Woof," said Rusty in saying that he guessed they had both better keep still

about that morning's adventure. Rusty wasn't very proud of dodging that cat, and certainly his master didn't wish to risk a scolding for leaving that window open so Rusty could get out.

Neither one of them thought of the policeman friend ever saying anything about it, so both were very much surprised a week later to have Betty ask what day it had been that Rusty was picked up by a policeman who knew him.

"Picked up by a policeman!" exclaimed Mrs. Abbott, looking at her husband in surprise. "I haven't heard about that!"

"I'm surprised," said Mr. Abbott solemnly as he looked at Rusty, his eyes twinkling. "What were you arrested for, sir? Robbing a lunch-room?"

Rusty tried to turn the conversation from that subject. He put his head beneath the table and sneezed, spoke softly and then tried to kiss Betty. But she was

determined to find out. She paid no attention to him. Instead, she looked at her father severely and slowly shook her finger at him.

“The big officer at the corner near the center asked me this noon when we girls were walking after lunch if I didn’t own a black spaniel. Then he told me about finding Rusty.”

Mr. Abbott pretended for a minute that he couldn’t imagine what Betty was talking about, but when every one but Rusty insisted on knowing the truth, he told the story. Still he protested that Rusty, being so intelligent, must have opened the window himself. Rusty said two hearty woofs to help out the story, but neither Betty nor her mother believed a word about his opening the window.

“I am afraid that I shall have to go with you to the city, for evidently it is not safe to trust Rusty to your care,” Mrs. Abbott said with a deep sigh. “I did

think you thought enough of us not to let anything happen to him."

"Well, you and Betty take care of him Saturday when we go to Silver Springs," replied Mr. Abbott. "Then nothing possibly can happen to him."

And Rusty, glad that the conversation had been turned from the story of that unfortunate morning in the city, applauded the decision for the next trip.

"This is the last long trip we shall be able to make," Mr. Abbott said Saturday morning as they were driving toward Silver Springs. "I hope you will get Rusty safely back, because next week we must start for home and I wouldn't want to be obliged to leave him behind to chew up elephants and alligators and be arrested."

Betty clung a little tighter to the new leash that had been bought to replace the one that had broken at Winter Haven. "I'll keep him with me every minute,"

she promised. "He never gets away from me."

"If we should leave him in the car, we would not leave a window wide open," said Mrs. Abbott with just the flicker of a smile.

No one could tell when Rusty yipped twice whether he was in favor of having a window left open or not. But he looked straight at his master when he spoke, which caused that gentleman to say that even Rusty took sides against him.

At the Springs, objection was made to having Rusty go in a boat. The proprietor explained that other passengers might not like it. Mr. Abbott promptly settled that by engaging one of the smaller boats for his own party exclusively.

The center of the bottom of the boat was of heavy glass, the passengers seated on each side looking down over a low board wall that protected the glass from their feet. Betty held Rusty firmly on

her lap as they started off over the crystal clear water. The boatman steered them here and there over springs that bubbled up from the bottom and in which gay-colored fish and turtles with bright yellow spots on their backs swam lazily back and forth.

At first, Rusty wanted to hang over the outside of the boat as he was accustomed to do at camp. But once he had caught sight of a bright-colored fish through the glass bottom, he was satisfied to watch there, whining and speaking little excited woofs.

The boatman, as he steered his craft hither and thither, explained the names that had been given to the different springs and answered Betty's excited questions concerning the names of the different fish they saw.

All had forgotten Rusty in their keen interest in the sights beneath them. He watched with them the changing scene

through the glass bottom until, as they ran very close to one shore, he caught sight over the side of two gay-colored turtles crawling lazily on a moss-covered log. They could be chased!



HE HAD MADE ONE WILD LEAP FOR THE LOG

Before Betty knew it he had made one wild leap for the log, but her hold on the leash was just strong enough to check him

in the air before she lost her hold. Consequently Rusty, instead of landing on the log, went splashing into the water!

Betty cried out. Mrs. Abbott exclaimed, "Betty!" Mr. Abbott, knowing well that Rusty was perfectly safe in the water, said, "Ahem. You might think that I was in charge of that black nuisance. But I am not. A young lady who told me that she never let him get away has full care of him."

The boatman, who had stopped his motor, grinned as he threw it into reverse and in a moment had steered close enough to the log from which the turtles had disappeared when Rusty went overboard, and on which Rusty was still trying to climb.

Mr. Abbott caught the leash trailing in the water and, catching Rusty with the other hand, lifted him to the bow of the boat, where, of course, he was well spattered when the little dog shook himself

and then looked back at the log and whined.

His master wiped his damp face and looked down at his sadly spotted white suit.

“It’s just as well that we are going home next week,” he said. “If we make any more trips, something will happen to this dog that may prove more disastrous than spoiling a suit of clothes.”

“Perhaps it is just as well,” Mrs. Abbott agreed. “I shall be sorry to leave, but very glad to get back where things are normal once more.”

Betty was very quiet on the ride home as she held Rusty on her lap.

“I shall be sorry to leave Sally and all the pretty things down here,” she said. “Won’t you, Rusty?”

“Woof,” Rusty agreed, opening one eye for a moment, for he was very sleepy.

CHAPTER XV

RUSTY ARRIVES HOME AGAIN

“ I’M going to miss you, little fellow,” Mr. Travers said Sunday morning following the trip to Silver Springs as they were walking down through the orange grove while Rusty’s family was at church. “ I wouldn’t mind a bit if Betty decided that she didn’t want you any longer, and gave you to me.”

“ Woof,” said Rusty a little doubtfully. He liked this man who made friends with birds and squirrels and who understood how little dogs liked to be treated. But he had said something about Betty that Rusty was not sure he approved.

They stopped at the brush pile, of course. Mr. Travers even gave it a kick

or two, but none of the little brown rabbits felt like a run that morning. They continued to the home of the squirrel at the far end of the grove, where Mr. Travers left some nuts in a certain place and then they went back to his apartment, where Rusty could play with him a few minutes and then have his Sunday morning nap on the big couch with two pillows at his back for comfort while Mr. Travers read.

It was evident to Rusty at dinner that something out of the ordinary was about to happen. Betty was very quiet. When immediately after dinner his big mistress began to open drawers and closets and get out suitcases and grips, nothing more was necessary to tell a little spaniel that they were about to go somewhere. He helped to look over things, as he always did.

“I wish you would walk down and see Sally and take this nuisance with you,” Betty’s father said to her as he dragged

Rusty from a closet where he was preparing to bring out shoes. "Your mother and I can get so much more done that we are sure will remain done if Rusty is out of our way. We have lived through these three months in spite of him, although we have had some narrow squeaks, and I don't want to have him wreck us at the last moment."

So Rusty went on his last visit to Peter. While Betty and Sally talked and talked, and promised and promised to write every week and tell everything that had happened to each other, Rusty and Peter went through their pretended battle that they both enjoyed every time Rusty was at the Robbins' home.

It was then so late in the winter season that even in the interior of Florida the weather had become so warm that children were playing in the shallow water of the lake. Several of them had tiny playboats, which they upset, spilling each other

into the water with loud shouts and much splashing.

Betty and Sally, hearing the shouts, decided to walk down to the beach and watch the fun, for neither of the girls was a swimmer.

Rusty, busily engaged in trying to dodge his way up the front steps which Peter was defending so valiantly, let the girls get well started on their way before he answered Betty's call of "Hi, Rusty. Come on." Then he raced after them, shouts of the children in the water making him certain that he was headed for some fun.

He overtook the girls just as they reached the little beach and exactly in time to see two little girls upset from their small boat and go splashing into the water with shrieks of laughter.

Without pausing, Rusty leaped in, too, with a great splash, and swam with all his speed to the rescue! Little girls scream-

ing in the water meant to him that they needed his help! But the girls, who were standing with the water up to their shoulders trying to right their boat, didn't



SWAM WITH ALL HIS SPEED

know Rusty. They saw him swimming toward them snapping at the bubbles and barking to tell them he was coming. They screamed in real fright, and hurriedly waded to the shore.

Rusty turned and swam after them,

while Betty and Sally called to them not to be afraid, that Rusty was only trying to help them. As the water shoaled near the shore, they made better time in their frantic rush to escape from the dog. Betty and Sally met them and quieted their fears as Rusty came out of the water and shook himself over all four. Betty was provoked, and scolded Rusty for wetting their Sunday dresses. But Rusty didn't mind. He had rescued two little girls who had called for help!

He wiggled and waved his tail very fast until one of them mustered up courage to pat him on his head. That was all the thanks he asked. He was ready for whatever next needed his attention. That proved to be an exciting half-hour in the boat and in the water, for in a few minutes the little girls had been convinced that Rusty was a fine playfellow. Time and again he was put in the boat, and time and again he was upset into the water with his

two companions, whom he considered that he rescued each time. He was so tuckered out after the play that he tried to persuade Betty to carry him back to Sally's home. But because he was wet, she refused.

With many a lingering look behind, he slowly followed Betty and Sally, the water dripping from his long, silky coat which dried, however, very rapidly in the hot sun. By the time he reached his own home, his coat was not even damp. He waited impatiently for Betty to open the door, because when he had left the house, preparations were being made to go somewhere.

He shot his little body inside the instant the door was opened and raced from suitcase to bag and into the bedrooms. Back to the sitting-room he trotted, where Mr. and Mrs. Abbott were reading parts of the same Sunday paper. He looked reproachfully at his master.

"Ah, hah," Mr. Abbott jeered at him.

“ We managed this time to get packed without you helping us, didn't we? ”

Rusty looked solemnly around the room. “ Woof,” he said. Without another look at any of his family, he went into Betty's bedroom and, very much out of sorts, although he had had a glorious time in the water with the children, he snuggled down and went to sleep, wondering where the family could be going this time. He had begun to regard the cottage as home. In fact, he hadn't given a thought to Rex or Mittens and her kittens for long, long weeks. He had had too many other things to think about. He had become accustomed to eating his meals in the kitchen without the company of Mittens daintily eating hers from a dish at the side of his under the sink.

Instead of Rusty or Betty being the first to awaken the next morning, it was Mr. Abbott himself who called to them to get up, because they had many things

to attend to before they could get started on their long journey North. Even though he had missed much of the preparations for going away the afternoon before, and still more of them that had been accomplished after he and Betty had gone to bed, he found some things to help about that morning. And he did his best. He would have done more, only Mr. Travers, who stopped to ask if he could be of assistance, called him for a last romp through the grove.

“You could be lots of help, my friend,” Mr. Abbott told Mr. Travers, “if you would get this good-for-nothing dog out of the house and keep him away until we can get these last things packed and be sure that we haven’t got him tied in with some of them.”

But they came back before everything was packed in the car and, although Betty was charged with holding him, he succeeded in tripping his master once and

managed it so that he received the most sympathy because of his yelping about one foot that had been stepped on.

“Nobody is sorry for me,” grumbled his master, “although I know my right shin is skinned from end to end.”

After many good-byes to Mr. Travers and promises to return another winter if possible, they finally got started on the long trip home. After the first few miles every one settled down for the long grind. And that included Rusty, who knew as well as did the others that this was no ordinary ride.

Seven days later Rusty, sitting on Betty's lap trembling with excitement that he caught from Betty, suddenly barked to call attention to the fact that he was seeing things that were familiar.

In a very few minutes more they had turned into a street of which Rusty knew every inch. His barking, hanging out of the window, was answered by a great deep

“Woof, woof,” from the rear of the yard. Rex, the big St. Bernard, had recognized the voice of his little friend, and was answering from away down by the garage.

Rusty was the first out, Betty unfastening his leash that he might not be handicapped. James and Mandy and Sarah came hurrying to welcome them back, and from the house came also Aunt Carrie and Miss Wisters, who, Rusty instantly remembered, did not approve of little dogs. But he didn't care. They didn't count with him.

James was playing with him, and even Rex crouched down and acted as if he would run and dodge if it were not such hard work.

And when from the rear of the house came Mittens, Rusty was nearly beside himself. He rushed for her and, while she laid back her ears and crouched down, he kissed and kissed her until she was almost as wet as if she had fallen into a pond.

The Abbots and Rusty were home again.



RUSTY WAS NEARLY BESIDE
HIMSELF

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